

魔術士オーフェンはぐれ旅

我が呼び声に応えよ獣

秋田禎信



富士見ファンタジア文庫

イラスト 草河遊也

「我は放つ光の白刃！」
声と同時に、純白の閃光が部屋に満ちた！



クリーオウはボルカンの剣を奪い取り、
無謀にも、殺し屋ブラックタイガーに斬りかかる!



オーフェンは、身動きもできずに、
その部屋にいるものを見つめていた……



Prologue

“Don’t look at me!”

But he cannot look away, or rather his whole body is stuck in some sort of paralysis. He stood at the entrance of the room, staring blankly at her...

The room was very well organized and clean, with daily necessities properly placed in each corner of the room. There was an old bed, tables, bookshelves, and a closet filled with clothes, and a thick layer of curtains hung from the window. And the floor is covered with a soon to be polished carpet. She knelt down and stretched out her hands, clutching her face while screaming out aloud.

“Don’t look at me! Please!”

However, even though he heard her screams, he was expressionless, motionless. It was a short fifteen-year-old teenager. He has black hair, dark coloured eyes yet he retained a trace of childishness,

though he does show signs of maturity even if only faintly. Overall, he is a skinny teenager. However, having said that, starting from an early age he received numerous of experiences in combat training, so he isn't frail, his body is slim like a sharp blade, standing erect.

He doesn't seem to understand the situation which is unfolding. He could only comprehend that she was crying out aloud "Don't look at me", while slumped on the floor crying.

"Azalie, are you crying?"

However, she did not answer. She covered her face with both hands and kept yelling.

"Don't look at me."

She wore a loose black robe - which is the mark of the black sorcerers from the "Tower of Fang" who hail from this continent, only people with potential get to wear this uniform. Girls like her, around the age of twenty generally don't wear this sort of clothing, thought for her to complete her combat

training she had to cut her wavy black hair quite short. Since her face is covered with her hands you cannot see it clearly, but between those fingers there are a pair of dark brown eyes. Her height and age is almost the same as most of the boys, though she has very slender limbs.

“Don’t look at me please, go away!”

She yelled again, but her words fell upon deaf ears. Moreover, her voice seemed full of anger. The boy took a step inside the room, and shouted aloud nervously.

“Azalie, what happened? Wait right here, I’ll go get teacher—”

“No— —Don’t— —!”

She cried aloud, and quickly changed her tune. Because both of her hands were clutching her face, her voice sounded a little distorted.

“It’s useless! Don’t call Childman— —don’t call anyone.”

“But— —”

“Enough, get out of here! Leave me alone!”

She held out her hand as she shouted at him, though when his eyes saw her hand he was shocked. As a result of her training, her once beautiful and slender hands and skin have now been reduced to anything but beautiful. But his eyes were now focused to her long fingers, which have now become something like claws. As if he doubted his own eyes he closed them and blinked, then shouted.

“Azalie, your hand— —?”

“I told you, get out of here!”

She shouted again. And then, her head tilted towards the side, and a large cracking sound was heard, bodily fluids began to pour out of her head, and lumps of flesh also started to fall off. She obviously wasn't human anymore, a clanging sound was heard as the belt at her waist broke, her waist started to unnaturally twist and swelling up.

The boy started to scream.

Now he finally came to understand— —that she was becoming an inhuman monster.

As her waist started expanding her clothes started to rip, revealing a pair of huge wings. At the same time she started shaking, as fluids started to pour from her mouth. Blood mixed with the flesh that fell from her fingers started dropping to the floor. Her chin started to split in two revealing a barely visible red lizard-like tongue, her cries continued.

“Don’t look at me!”

Her cries remained the same, she still spoke with her own voice.

“Azalie— —”

The boy shouted. However, upon realizing that he didn’t know what else to say, he shut his mouth.

In the meantime, she continued to change. With her robe now in tatters, her shoulder were exposed and not long after green scales started to appear— —At

the same time she now had four arms and her body had swelled to about three meters long. She — — or rather it, since it no longer resembles it's former self, has even grown a tail that goes round her multiple times. It repeated itself again, this time whimpering.

“Don't look at me

Hidden behind it's eyes there seems to be a burning inferno — — with it's giant body and physical strength it quickly moves towards the window. Beating its wings, it gave out a loud roar and bursted through the window, leaving the tower and taking flight. The boy rushed to the window and skipped over the puddles of blood, but by the time he arrived it was out of his sight, it simply disappeared without a trace.

His expression was that of uncertainty, uncertain of what to do next he went to leave the room, though he noticed something. With the pools of blood that were left behind he was completely oblivious to the

swords, which were all blackened with blood and rusted.

Since that day, the boy never did see her again— — many years passed.

Chapter 1: Business Day

—Year after year passed him by— —and he kept walking— —

— —Thud, thud, thud!— —

“Get up, asshole! If you don’t I’ll beat you to death with a wooden stick! Hey, hurry up!”

He heard the violent knock on the door, Orphen visibly irritated rolled over in his bed. Although this budget hotel mattress is thin, it was comfortable enough for him to sleep on.

“I told you a long time ago! Today is business day! Are you trying to ruin my plan? If you don’t come out now, I’ll kill you, you hear me?!”

Half asleep he tried to wake himself up, he slowly opened his slightly swollen eyelids, and stared at the stained ceiling. Then he uncomfortably averted his gaze towards the window, sunlight shines through

the window and from its angle, it should be about noon. The banging on the door intensified.

“Asshole! Are you actually refusing to come out? Do you want to die? Fine then, if you won’t come out then I’ll have to send you to hell!”

(So.....who’s gonna die?)

Orphen half asleep, began to think to himself.

(Me, killed by that little loudmouth Volcano Vulcan? Yeah, right!)

He pulled off the bedsheets, sat up and shouted.

“You loudmouth!”

Orphen’s shouting reached the other side of the door, and then proceeded to scratch his own chest. The noise outside the door disappeared and hit spat onto the floor, he violently grabbed the vest which lay beside the bed and put it on. And lastly, he picked up the hanging necklace, it was a delicate thing with a dragon wrapped around a sword, it was like a coat of arms. It was made of silver and shined

with a dazzling light, Orphen put the silver dragon necklace into his hand and softly whispered to it.

“He said he was going to kill me”

He made a wry smile as he put the necklace around his neck, and then a violent knock on the door rang out throughout the room. “Listen here asshole, do you think I wanted to come to this slimy place!”

Orphen ignored his cries and got out of bed, and looked at the mirror hanging in the corner of the room. He looked about twenty years old, and had a grumpy face with black hair. Since he just woke up, he squinted at the mirror and thought to himself for a moment as he caught the reflection of his eyes. They had the sense of irony, outside the cries become more intense.

“You bastard, do that again and I’ll run you over with a road roller! Come out now!”

Orphen looked impatiently at the door, then he extended his right hand and began chanting.

“Sword of Light, whom I do release!”

A pure white flash instantly filled the entire room. Orphen’s hands were the instrument that released the bright light and a torrent of white light hit the sturdy wooden door, creating a deafening sound. The door busted open and shattered into a million pieces, scattering it around the room. And out leapt Orphen, from the get go you could tell that he led a busy life as he had scruffy black hair that seemed to go unwashed for days. Orphen squinted his eyes to the dwarf and asked him.

“I came out, what do you want?”

Covered in dust, the boy whispered.

“That’s good, though in future remember to respect your elders, alright?”

Orphen, with a look of satisfaction observed him — — A stocky teenager who seems to be about eighteen years old. His is about 1.3 meters tall which is the standard height for a dwarf. He wears traditional clothing and a fur cape, and he carries a

heavy sword in his scabbard. Vulcan still taking in the view turned around to see burnt wooden debris behind him.

“Uhm, Orphen.....I’ve taken the liberty to set up our next business opportunity”

“I’ll be grabbing a bite to eat before I head out, wait outside the bar for me”

“Sure”

Vulcan whispered, he had a wide eyed expression on his face and then ran down the hallway in a panic. Listening in, Orphen could hear him stumbling down the stairs and yelling abuse back at him. He then lazily stretched himself from top to bottom.

“Its business day, but before that — —”

Orphen stretched out his right hand to the destroyed door — —

“Heal that which is mine, Spirit of Healing Light!”

After he finished his chant the debris of the door

began to shake, and just as if time was being rewinded, all the pieces of the door flew through the air and began to take its original shape. It looked good as new. Orphen lazily walked a few steps towards the newly reformed door and tapped his finger against it, then he muttered softly to himself.

“All’s well that ends well”

Although the door was more or less returned to its original state, small scorch marks could still be seen. But he just shrugged them off and proceeded to gently turn to doorknob. Orphen never once thought he’d be staying in as a guest in a peaceful inn called “Bag up’s Inn”.

The business is located deep inside the cities complex road system on the “back streets”, although the building looks quite old, the hotel itself is in good shape. He left his room on the second floor and went downstairs, standing at the bar of the inn was the owner Bagup, who was grinning while cleaning a glass. And his son Majic was cleaning the floor with

a mop, Majic is his own son even though the two are nothing alike.

If you live in a coastal city you are generally mistaken for a pirate, if you use this as a comparison for father and son, Majic is then an elegant beautiful boy. He has blond hair and beautiful docile eyes, and is a neatly dressed young man. Orphen went towards the bar and Majic looked over and said hello.

“Ah, sir Orphen, you’ve woken up.”

Orphen has stayed at this hotel for the past two years and has become acquainted with Majic, Bagup unceremoniously waved as Orphen approached.

“Unfortunately I was woken up by that loudmouth idiot”

“But I heard another loud noise”

“That was me destroying the door, but don’t worry, I’ve fixed it” Orphen said, as he sat on a seat beside the bar. He then told the bearded Bagup to make

him breakfast.

“Did something go wrong with your business plan?”

Bagup said as he flipped the switch of the used the recently installed gas stove, he then filled a pot with porridge over the fire, giving himself a sense of accomplishment. Even though he has been on the rough seas you couldn't help but notice his appearance, but his voice was gentle and he sounded like a nice guy.

Orphen putting his arms against the bar, replied with a sign.

“Yes. Volcan said he found a way to make big money. I didn't ask for the details”

Bag Up smiled.

“Sounds like you're not looking forward to it”

“Sort of. Every time he has some sort of plan he always makes a mess of it”

“And you're alright with this?”

Bagup enquired.

Orphen curled his lip and jokingly replied.

“You know what? That guy borrowed some money and he’s in debt to me. And I’m broke so he came with a plan to pay back the money”

“So, you’re broke, eh?”

There was much irony in the words that Bagup said, as he poured the porridge and put out the tableware on the bar. Orphen took the porridge and suddenly looked at Majic.

“Hey Majic, I’ll teach you some magic later if you want me to, but it’ll cost you”

“Really?”

The mop rattled and Majic’s face began to shine.

“Don’t be tempted by such strange things my boy”

Bagup said, warning his son. Orphen lifted the necklace from around his neck, as he demonstrated one of his most valuable possessions.

“Only black sorcerers from the Tower of Fangs have this dragon pendant, this is an opportunity he can’t afford to miss”

“I don’t think Majic needs to learn Magic”

Bagup stroked his beard and spoke again.

“And don’t forget that you are broke, I can’t take you seriously”

“Don’t look at me like that, didn’t you know that I was a candidate for Court sorcerer?”

“Yeah, and you were eliminated on the basis of cheating, am I right?”

“Not at all. Besides Majic is talented — — he’s a genius just like myself.....I know he can do it— —”

“Really?”

“Hey, don’t take him seriously, Majic.”

Bagup stroked his beard longer this time, then he started cleaning the dishes and glasses.

“How could a guy like you possibly be one of the

thirteen candidates for Court sorcerer? If you were such a powerful sorcerer then how did you end up being a money lender!? And don't give me your usual lip service."

Bagup finished his speech and took his son to the corner of the bar, then he stressed the fact again to Orphen.

"Stop playing around with my son, he's a very gullible boy but he won't believe you anymore."

"Calm down, I'm obviously not lying."

Orphen was at odds over the tone of the conversation, he then picked up the spoon and began to stir the porridge.



“Magic has the talent, he just turned fourteen this year, didn’t he? All he does in this Inn is mop the floors, you should at least let him go to a decent school.”

“He did go to school. He went to an elementary school where he learned theology, basic math and reading and writing.”

“I’m not talking about an ordinary school, let him go to a certain famous place to learn magic.”

“Are you trying to say that he should study at the Tower of Fangs?”

“Not at all.....I’m just saying that he should learn from a certain someone.”

Orphen muttered while munching on his porridge, as he was kind of embarrassed to say out aloud. He let go of the spoon and started touching the necklace once again — — on his necklace was the coat of arms of the Tower of Fangs, black sorcerers receive this as to prove their identity.

However, Bagup was observing his son and he looked unhappy as he mopped the floor. Orphen noticed no change in his expression, Bagup then spoke unemotionally.

“Anyway, do you think Majic has what it takes?”

Orphen then shifted his tone of voice.

“But do you think he can become a powerful sorcerer?”

“God knows. But let me remind you that this kid’s mother — —”

Orphen interrupted his words.

“Pure and sincere enthusiasm. That’s the path to become a powerful sorcerer.”

Upon instantly hearing these words, Bagup laughed out loud. Though he put the glass he had in hand into the dishwashing area, as to prevent himself from dropping it.

“If that’s the case, then you can’t possibly be a powerful sorcerer!”

Orphen didn't say anything, he just grunted, and continued to eat his porridge.

*

“Are you kidding, that nasty guy!

Volcano Vulcan said in front of Bagup's Inn as he paced back and forth, under a heavy and fierce breath.

“What a show off, he's such an asshole!”

At the same time, there was another guy sitting on the ground with an empty bucket next to the entrance of the Inn, idly dangling his feet. But he was just like Vulcan, a little on the short side and seemed to be around the same age. He wore a big pair of thick glasses of all things, and a leather backpack beside the bucket. Although he wasn't like Vulcan, he did have a small sword hanging by his waist. Though if you took one look at his backpack

you'd instantly know that he doesn't pack light. It may seem like a lot for a man of his stature, but he can handle it.

Vulcan suddenly turned to the guy wearing glasses, looking for a response.

"Well, aren't I right?"

".....Hey!"

It was clear that he wasn't listening to Vulcan's speech, and started back blankly. The expression on Vulcan's face was beyond friendly.

"I'm talking about that black sorcerer, don't you think he's got an arrogant attitude?"

The guy put more effort into listening to his words, but still looked confused.

"Hey, and didn't you borrow money from him too?"

It seems both of them are brothers.

"But that was..."

Vulcan just regarded this as his consent, and

continued aggressively.

“And that guy’s so full of himself. You know what, I think that stupid human is just wasting our time. He isn’t good for anything, he’s just scum.”

(Business people aren’t usually his thing...) And that’s the unspoken truth.

Having said that, he’s dragged his brother into this business opportunity. However, because of this, he’s been very uneasy since this morning — — he’s had to listen to Vulcan say countless times that today they can make big money. Every time he asked his brother for details, he would remain tight lipped and stop talking entirely. This definitely isn’t a good sign.

Vulcan continued grumbling.

“That’s good, though in future remember to respect your elders, alright?”

Vulcan said, mimicking Orphen.

“Oh please, he’s only two or three years older than

me, and he had the nerve to act so superior than me!”

At this point, he just sounds like an annoying child.

He then felt the spring’s winds blowing through the alleyway, and looked up into the sky.

In the skies overlooking Totokanta, a few sparse clouds could be seen overhead, and it looks like they could fall at any moment.

*

Tick, tock, tick, tock..... A statue of a goddess, ticked with anticipation as the pendulum swung while both parties sat opposite of one another.

Sitting in an elegant and luxurious decorated living room, Orphen basically sat in despair. The fireplace wasn’t on and with summer slowly approaching, the weather would only get warmer, but this fireplace just seemed out of place. Pure white tablecloth with

fine embroidery patterns were irately sitting at eye level in front of them. In a corner of the room there laid two sets of armour and swords, with the weapons intersecting one another. A thick scarlet carpet was sprawled across the room and you wouldn't be surprised if people tripped over it. Right now, the couch that Orphen was sitting on had fine tree like patterns, it was probably worth more than a small pile of gems. Crystal lights were hanging from the ceiling, and this room was one of the biggest living rooms that Orphen had ever seen. Facing such a situation, Orphen was confused, as he didn't know what he got himself into. Now, he just wanted to leave this place, and escape from this tense situation.

In fact, Orphen was dressed in formal wear. Feeling a little stuffy, took this opportunity to remove his necklace and place it into the pocket of his tuxedo. Sitting beside him were Vulcan and his brother Dortin, both of which were dressed in formal wear too. Vulcan just sat there, grinning the entire time.

Though from his perspective he couldn't see Orphen's face, but from feeling him shivering in anticipation, he could tell that he wasn't in top form.

"You say you are an entrepreneur, but you're so young."

The middle aged woman sitting opposite of Vulcan said. A shiver ran up Orphen's back, mainly because he didn't know how to respond, but luckily Vulcan interjected.

"Yes, but are from a company in a distant land."

"A company? Then why don't you tell us its name."

"Well, uhm...you probably wouldn't know it anyway, since it's based so far away."

Orphen gently put his hand to his head to restrain his headache.

"I see... Anyway, Mr. Orphen — — "



It took him a while to realize it was his name that they called.

“Ah, yes. What is it ladies?”

His head snapped up, as he spoke in a tone consistent of people from high society. The women happily smiled.

“You seem nice enough. However, most people don’t get married after they’ve just met — —”

The woman finished talking, then she gently motioned to the girl sitting beside her.

Remembering the introductions from the star of the meeting, Orphen remembered that the young woman’s name was Mariabelle — — Mariabelle Everlasting. Sitting beside her was her mother, and her name was Tishtiny.

Orphen set his sights upon Mariabelle, and she smiled back. Even though she hasn’t uttered a word yet. She looked like a wholesome girl and had long golden hair, yet Orphen could tell that she was older

than him. She looked around 22-23 years old, and was quite the beautiful lady. Though Orphen was concerned about her mannerisms, for she looked kinda...not smart.

Orphen took that in consideration.

(I can't believe I'm using this stupid method to make money, I should have stuck with teaching Majic. This is all Vulcan's fault — —) Orphen's face didn't show the raging firestorm inside of him, instead he just sat there leisurely drinking a cup of tea with Vulcan.

(In short, they were simply planning a marriage fraud!)

Blind dates are really uncommon in Totokanta, especially for noble families. They had checked out many other rich families in the area, but choose the Everlasting family as their victim. Orphen has no idea how Vulcan managed to even set this up in the first place, but he had a bad feeling about it.

“Having said that — —”

Tishtiny couldn't think of anything else to say. She had been waiting for her daughter to speak to him, and she looked at her and urged her daughter to talk to him. But in the end, she gave up and started with the hard questions.

“Mr. Orphen, what kind of work do you do?”

“Huh?”

Orphen was taken aback by the question, and Vulcan rose to the challenge and interjected.

“Well, our company plants, cultivates and makes sleeping medicine!”

(That idiot — —)

Orphen didn't have time to prepare, and Tishtiny continued the topic of conversation and asked the next question.

“Ah, sleeping medicine.....then what kind?”

“Well, the experts can tell you that — —”

Orphen interrupted Vulcan, and smoothly gave an

answer.

“The medicine is sold on the open market and is mostly cultivated in the highlands, the herbs are grinded into powder and are sold in multiple varieties. They are little pills that are easily swallowed, it’s generally called the sleeping forever medicine.

“Sleeping forever medicine?”

“It sounds like poison.”

“Ah.....”

Tishtiny put her hand over her mouth, and didn’t say anything. Vulcan’s voice filled the void.

“Of course not, we don’t sell that sort of thing.”

Orphen didn’t expect this, he just sat there motionless.

(Why sleeping pills!)

He whispered to Vulcan, as he painfully looked for an answer.

(For women of high society, sleeping pills are a necessity!)

Orphen didn't bother to ask any more questions, and with a devilish grin he put his poker face back on. A faint smile appeared on Mariabelle's face, but he didn't want to take advantage of her as a black sorcerer, but as Mr. Orphen. Tishtiny harboured many doubts about this blind date, especially since she couldn't expose the true identity of Orphen.

Although the Everlasting family wasn't nobility, in the eyes of Orphen, they were simply a wealthy noble family living in the commercial district. Even though the family's wealth was gained by previous generations, Tishtiny was in charge of it. And if she found out about Vulcan's little scheme, suffice to say, she wouldn't be happy.

Orphen stared blankly at Mariabelle's face, she had a sweet smile. He wondered that if she married Vulcan, would he even get any of the money? A smile appeared on Orphen's face.

“You’re such a terrible sorcerer, and your performance was terrible too!”

Tishtiny and Mariabelle went elsewhere in their mansion, leaving the three of them alone in the living room. Vulcan suddenly let out a loud roar, mostly due to the excessive tension and rested himself against the couch. Like a prisoner going to the gallows, he hung his head.

“My performance was terrible?!”

Orphen fiercely responded.

“First of all, let’s get this straight. You make me wear this stupid rental suit, and without explanation you drag me to this big mansion. How do you expect me to act?”

“Hurph”

Vulcan pondered quietly.

“I was acting like you were a big hot shot in our company. If you just played along, then you would happily be on the road to marriage.”

“Hey, asshole...don’t so casually determine my future.”

Orphen said as he grabbed Vulcan by the neck, though he made sure not to dirty his outfit. And both of them were staring hatefully into each other’s eyes. Then Dartin suddenly rose up and exclaimed — — “Guys, stop fighting, even I didn’t know about the marriage fraud”

“Really?”

Orphen stressed his point once again, but Vulcan wasn’t listening.

“Come on! Could you have thought of a better plan?”

“You’ve gone too far!”

Orphen stood up from his side of the couch, speaking as if he was some preacher at the end of days.

“First of all, you’re barking woke me up. Then you drag me all the way out here to do this marriage fraud!”

Listening to his rant, Vulcan lifted up his face.

“You don’t know the first thing about marriage fraud!”

“And don’t forget who started this whole affair!”

“Don’t say such stupid things”

Vulcan said nonchalantly.

“But marriage fraud is such a stupid way to make money”

Orphen said, wanting to know why he choose it.

“What’s wrong with you? Do you want your money back or not?”

Dortin had a worried look on his face, and Vulcan patted his chest.

“This is my master plan. And when it’s complete, we’ll be rich. Once we’ve sealed the deal, we’ll be able to get at their accounting books and use it as we please.”

Vulcan just wouldn’t shut up, so Orphen took one of the chairs and kicked it at him.

“You bastard!”

As soon as Orphen started to roll up his sleeves, the door opened.

Orphen immediately turned around, and Vulcan hurried back into his seat. The three of them focused their attention at the living room door, where a seventeen year old girl was standing. “Who are — —”

Before Orphen could explain the situation, the girl spoke before him.

“Ah, sorry.”

The girl banged the door shut, and a second later a knocking sound was heard.

“Please, come in — — no, wait a minute!”

Orphen grumbled while he tried to regain his composure.

“Come in.”

The door opened again, and the girl looked over.

“I’m sorry, I forgot to knock on the door. However, please don’t think I don’t know etiquette.”

The girl looked like Mariabelle, but more lively. Orphen could instantly tell that she was Mariabelle’s sister. She was wearing a beautiful dress white dress, looked very fit and had a petite body.

She didn’t seem to hear their previous conversation, but Orphen wanted to be sure.

“Well, since you don’t understand etiquette, could you please tell us who you are?”

“Oh, I’m sorry. My name is Cleo.”

She said her name, and put out her hand, then she shook hands with Orphen. But frowned.

“That’s a strong handshake you’ve got there.”

“Well, that’s because where I come from both men and women have to serve a couple of years in the military. After the second year, the skin on your hand begins to thicken.”

“Okay, I’ll take your word for it.”

(Great, she didn’t seem to hear their previous conversation.)

However, just as Orphen started smirking, Cleo began to smile.

“Anyway, I don’t think your marriage fraud plan is going to work.”

Orphen thought that she didn’t hear, but it seems he was proved wrong. However, Cleo’s smiling continued.

“Hey, I know you plan to deceive my sister, but to what extent?”

“How did you.....”

Orphen’s face begun to spasm. He looked over and saw Vulcan and Dortin shivering beside each other. It looks like his plan has come to an end, Cleo didn’t waste any moment trying to find out Orphen’s true identity.

“Oh, I overheard your conversation from outside the

door.”

“How much did you hear?”

“The entire thing.”

(This won’t end well...)

Orphen couldn’t help but buckle under the pressure, and Cleo was aware of his reaction. She grabbed his hand and repeated the question again.

“I know you plan to deceive my sister, but to what extent?”

“You’ve got it wrong.”

Orphen couldn’t find a proper excuse to escape from this dilemma.

“But I heard you talking about — —”

But in the middle of all this, Vulcan started shouting.

“It wasn’t me! It was his plan!”

Orphen simply ignored him.

“It’s true, this guy here is a bona fide con artist!”

“Don’t believe a word this troll says, he’s the one behind everything.”

“How cruel, first you drag me and my brother here and then you insult us”

“That’s a lie! You were the one who came up with this plan, remember?”

“Don’t believe him, he’s an evil black sorcerer! He’ll try and brainwash you like he did me and my brother — —”

“Enough!”

Orpheum shouted with all his might. And a wave of light hit the brother’s feet, resulting in a loud explosion that shook the entire house. The explosion sent Vulcan and Dortin flying through the air to a corner of the room. There was a big hole with burn marks in the expensive carpet, and the smoke that filled the room began to dissipate. The building was well built so damage to its foundation was nil.

“Well, that shut him up!”

Vulcan and Dorton lay in the corner, both of them knocked out. Orphen still had an angry face on him but a crackle of laughter erupted from behind him. It was Cleo, she seemed to be totally different from the other members of her family.

“Wow, that was quite the show. I knew it would get out of hand but I didn’t expect this.”

Orphen again, didn’t know how to respond.

“By the way, isn’t it fifteen years in prison for fraud?”

Cleo said with a smile, and immediately Vulcan began to cry while holding his head.

“But I was tricked!”

“You are very strange, Missy.”

Orphen said, as he walked towards her and kicked Vulcan aside as if he was a piece of rubbish.

“You can call me Cleo.”

“Okay Cleo, so do you intend to call the authorities?”

“Hmm”

The girl pondered, as she shook her long blond hair.

“So what are you going to do?”

“I won’t do anything. I don’t want to get my mother involved with the police.”

“That guy over there planned it all — — though, we have still deceived your sister and mother.”

“Well, that depends on you. You don’t seem like a bad guy but do you still plan to marry my sister?”

“Well — —”

Orphen said while frowning, he couldn’t think of any other way out of this situation, so he decided to come clean.

“Listen, Cleo. You’re sister think’s I’m a wealthy businessman, but this isn’t true.”

“I think she would have found out sooner or later, especially after the wedding.”

At this moment, a huge explosion shook the whole

house.

Boom!

At the same time, they could hear windows being broken. And the walls were giving out creaking sounds, they didn't know the origin of the explosion. Due to the explosion, they were all to the ground. Orphen could only think of everyone's safety — — they seemed to be alright. The explosion must have occurred somewhere in the house, but very far from the room which they were in. As for the cause of the explosion, one could only guess.

Comparing the explosion to Orphen's magic, it small compared to the explosion, which sounded like a giant hit flew out of the sky and impacted the house. The only thing Orphen could think of was to get everyone out of here.

“Get out of here!”

Orphen shouted to Vulcan and the others. However, Vulcan and his brother Dortin flew into a panic and started screaming like a crazy person. It was like

watching two dogs running after each other's tails.

“Didn’t you hear me?!”

Orphen thought to himself for a second, he wondered what would happen to Vulcan and his brother if they were arrested here. Though he knew they would break under interrogation and reveal everything, so he quickly put it out of mind.

“Hey, wait a minute. Mr — —”

Cleo shouted as she grabbed his arm. Though when he turned around, she had quite the relaxed expression on her face.

“It’s not Mr — — Just call me Orphen!”

“What kind of name is Orphan?”

(Note: In the English Language an Orphan is a child whose parents are dead or have abandoned them permanently. Orphen’s name is Orphan except the “a” is replaced with an “e”. A symbolic name he gave to himself after leaving the Tower of Fang.

“It’s a long story.”

Orphen wanted to tell her all about himself, but this wasn't the time for that. He then got Vulcan and Dortin together, and rolled them up inside the expensive carpet. He intended to throw them out the nearest open window he could find, and he didn't care if it was a soft landing or not.

But someone screamed far away, it was a woman's scream.

"That's my sister's voice!"

"Darn——"

Orphen said to himself, but he needed to get away from this place. He doesn't want to go to prison, however he couldn't ignore the screams of Mariabelle. She could be trapped under rubble or hurt, he needed to find if she and her mother was safe.

"Where is her room?"

Orphen asked Cleo, he intended on rescuing them.

"Follow me"

Another scream followed and Cleo ran faster, with Orphen following her into the hallway. The entire house seemed deserted, everywhere there was luxurious furnishings and everywhere looked like the aftermath of a riot. There was no trace of any servants, and another explosion rocked the building, knocking vases over and smashing them.

“Hey, don’t you think about escaping, black sorcerer!”

Orphen could hear Vulcan’s voice from behind. He seemed to have regained his sanity, and began following them. Orphen didn’t even bother looking back, he just continued onward. He found running in his rental suit kind of onward, but that didn’t stop him from chasing after Cleo.

“This is it.”

Cleo’s face wore a tense expression — — for she didn’t know what was on the other side of that door. The walls were painted white to match the oak doors that were made out of wood, there were

sophisticated and delicate carving patterns all over the door. It reminded Orphen of a forest, as if beyond these doors lay a beautiful maiden awaiting to be rescued from beneath the rubble.

Cleo grabbed the doorknob and tried to open the door, it wouldn't move at all, it was if the door itself was locked from the inside.

“What now...”

Cleo casted her eyes upon Orphen, wondering if he could help.

“Leave it to me.”

Orphen said, as he nodded and closed his eyes. He then started to focus and took a deep breath. To start a magical spell — — you generally need to say an incantation, using sound as a medium to convey magic. To prevent the incantation from losing it's effectiveness, one must say it as quick as possible.

Humans have two different types of magic. Orphen is a black sorcerer, and they are adept as energy

based magic such as light and heat, and they are able to cast healing magic. The other type is white magic, they can manipulate time and spirits.

Though you need to be highly skilled to be able to use white magic, as most people can't handle it.

After Orphen focused, he opened his eyes, then touched the doorknob and whispered.

“Bewitching gate beckoning me!”

After a moment, a clicking sound was heard from the door, Orphen approached the door and slowly pushed it open. Behind him Cleo softly murmured.

“I expected more.”

She was referring to that light wave that hit Vulcan in the living room, Cleo thought he would have blown the door open with magic. Orphen ignored Cleo's reaction and entered the room — — he was speechless.

Sneaking behind him, Vulcan muttered. “What is it?”

He saw what was in the room.

“It’s — — it’s a monster!”

“..... Shut up.”

Orphen said with a trembling voice. He stared motionless at that thing, his body seemed paralyzed, unable to move

Most of the room was destroyed. It looked like a giant meteorite flew down from the sky and created a big hole in the wall. Through the hole, he could see large parts of Totokanta. The windows were just big holes, and big gusts of wind were blowing through. Most of the furniture were in tatters, and a single stool stood upside down. Leaning against one was the windows was part of a bed frame, and the monster just sat there, menacingly.

Mariabelle was standing in front of Orphen, her body was trembling all over. Tishtiny stood beside her, but she tugged at her daughter’s arms as if to shield her. Both of them started screaming. Orphen was stuck in a daze, and it took a whack from Cleo to

bring him to his senses.

“It’s a giant monster!”

Mariabelle said, as the monster sat before them.

“What the hell’s wrong with you?! Do something about that dragon you rotten bastard!

“Shut the hell up!”

Orphen raised his leg as if he was going to attack the monster, but he spun around and kicked Vulcan instead.

“What was that for?!”

Vulcan shouted, but it seems Orphen was more concerned with staring at the dragon rather than listen to Vulcan’s whining. Which is what he was actually doing. The monster’s body was plastered with sticky mucus, and it’s scales were covered with bristles. The creature was about three metres in length, and probably weighed near a ton. It was very easy to tell where it’s head and body connected, it looked like a big oval object with arms and legs

sticking out and a head glued on top. But in actuality it looked like it had six feet, though it was hard to tell whether they were actually arms or legs. The hands at it's front looked liked it had crooked fingers, and on the monsters back lay a pair of giant wings, which shadowed over the entire room as it rose up.

The longer he stared, the longer they all would be at risk. But Orphen could see there was something special about this wild beast, it had a personality. Though he could see that it was a conflicted personality. He could see that it had green eyes, but they looked kind of burnt and it's eyelids covered the pupil. Orphen couldn't help but think he's seeing things repeat. It's almost melted eyelid covered not only the pupil, but it even down to it's chin, where blood-like liquid was dropping out.

This dragon was smart — — anytime it appeared it never chose heavily populated cities. Orphen doubted if he could even reason with the creature — — or rather, is it even rational. And if it is rational, then it should respond to his call.

“Azalie!”

Orphen shouted. Then the monster started to slowly turn it’s head, but he couldn’t tell if it was just moving or responding to him. So he shouted again.

“Azalie! I’ve been looking for you!”

Orphen stretch his arms out, and stepped forward. Behind him, Vulcan hurried over and grabbed him.

“Hello, do you want to die?!”

“Shut up!”

Orphen knocked Vulcan out of the way, and once again stepped forward to the monster. Vulcan yelled to him again.

“Hey! I don’t know what you’re thinking, but you can’t take that monster home with you! Haven’t you figured that out?!”

“It’s not a monster!”

“What did you say? Have you gone crazy, go near that thing and it’ll kill you!”

“It’s — —”

As soon as Orphen opened his mouth, the monster looked up towards the ceiling and let out a loud roar. It sounded like a dog howling, the sound filled the entire room and even kindled the fireplace.

“Ahhhhhh”

A wave of sorrow went over Orphen, but before he knew it a large wave of magic was casted around the room. Flames soon surrounded the beast, and a wall of fire separated everyone from the monster. Even though Orphen couldn’t see the monster clearly, he still shouted.

“Azalie!”

“Hurry up and do something bird brain!”

Vulcan shouted, as the wall of fire started to diminish.

“Azalie! Don’t run away! Please!”

Orphen shouted as loud as he could, he then raised his hands and started to chant a mantra.

“I withdraw thee, shrew’s dance!”

And suddenly the wall of fire disappeared without a trace, and the monster was gone. The room was filled with smouldering ruins, leaving everyone except Orphen looking in wonder. Orphen dashed over to the window, or what was left of it, and looked up into the sky. He looked for the monster but could not see it, it’s seems to have disappeared.

Chapter 2:

Remembering the Call

She studied black magic in the “Tower of Fang” since a young age. In fact if you asked her colleagues, they would say she was quite the idol. She was known as the “Chaos Witch.”

Though even though everyone considered her that, she was quite the beauty. After all, even he thought so. He was five years younger than her and was a student in the same classroom. Both of them had grown up together, since a very young age.

She has been very dissatisfied with her short hair — — but he believes that her short hair is more suitable.

Though she cut her hair, she still retained her feminine features. Her eyes were always so cheerful and had a brilliant radiance to them, and when he

stared into her eyes he could always see himself standing in her shadow. This gave him the motivation he needed to become a strong sorcerer.

Although in reality, he rarely got the chance to test his skills against hers. It was only during their combat training that he finally got pitted against her — — but like most things, it wasn't as easy as he thought. She fiercely grabbed him by the arm and threw him over her shoulder, so fast that he could hardly breathe when he hit the ground.

“You always seem to be waiting for me to throw you.”

She always said this. In fact, it's true, but it was his secret. It seems to bring back memories from long ago — — but even when you experience pain it, you can still dream.....

Even though Azalie was popular and made many accomplishments throughout her life, not many people attended her funeral, at least he thought so.

However, no one around him shared the same

opinion — — the boy never did hide his disgust from everyone else. Those people, who were mostly older than him, always muttered amongst themselves as he passed them by. Even so, those things they said still lingered in his ears.

“I didn’t expect this...”

“However, there are many witnesses”

“And then there was that noise...”

“They say everything is under control”

“But what about that...”

“That bloody stain.”

“Stain — —”

Stain.

It was like those words were imprinted on his body, he trembled as he listened — — it was if he was branded. But he never did feel any pain. He looked back at the “Tower of Fangs” backyard, where people were quietly coming out of the side entrance

and joining the queue of mourners.

He stood and watched the crowd of mourners, who apparently were friends of Azalie. From the faces he spotted in the queue, he some of them were very old, at least he thought so. The funeral queue slowly climbed the hill leading to the cemetery.

The boy kept his head down, like an animal being punished. As the coffin was being brought up from behind, no one walked with him.

“Krylancelo!”

His name was called, and he suddenly raised his head. He was a boy with red hair who was around the same age, and started to walk beside him.

“Oh, Hartia”

Krylancelo looked up at the redhead with dull eyes.

“I didn’t notice that you joined the funeral procession.”

“Me and you are the only two out of Childman’s class to attend”

Harita said, clutching himself, if he did this when the sun shines his hair would shine with a fiery red. But there was no sun today, only a moody atmosphere.

“Teacher?”

Krylancelo asked, much to the surprise to Hartia.

“You must be imagining things, teacher isn’t here yet.”

Hartia went to the front of the queue.

“Oh, yeah...”

Krylancelo muttered. Although he really didn’t care, about him or pretty much anything. Dead or alive, it doesn’t matter.

“Hey, cheer up. I know you and Azalie were close, but I don’t understand why you’re acting like this. It’s like you’re going to your own funeral.”

“I might as well be.”

“Hey!”

Hartia said in surprise. Subsequently, he left his friend, and went to the front of the queue beside his teacher's side. Krylancelo watched him leave the back of the queue, he then turned his gaze to the taller man. A black sorcerer — — his teacher, Childman. He is regarded as one of the best sorcerers in the entire continent. He was young and about 25 years old. His body and determination was strong, with piercing eyes that made him look like an impeccable warrior. His black hair had a rope tied around it, mostly because it was too long.

The road in front of him was filled with mourners, the phrase “stain” was whispered among them.

Located on a hill in the public cemetery, it was a little crowded. The queue was now at the cemetery, but the coffin was very light which made the people moving the coffin move at a quick pace. The young woman's body was very light — — Krylancelo inadvertently overheard them chatting in the lounge.

“No, the coffin doesn’t have a womans body inside.”

A nameless tombstone was dug in advance, which the coffin was placed in. The mourners started to sprinkle soil on the coffin with a shovel. Krylancelo started blankly — — Childman forcefully threw a shovel at him, Hartia gently took his shovel. Even those who would say bad things, shut their mouths. Krylancelo thought to himself. No matter how you are buried, you will never be satisfied with it. He stared at his shovel for a while, so long that it forced someone to cough to spur him into action. He jumped right into the hole and started digging with his shovel, he saw that the hole wasn’t deep enough.

“Whose funeral is this?!”

“This is the funeral of Azalie, the student of Childman.”

Childman said, but Krylancelo clearly wasn’t satisfied with his answer.

“Then why isn’t her body in the coffin?”

“You should have known the coffin is empty.”

Childman’s voice never wavered, it was as if Krylancelo hit a brick wall.

“Then this isn’t her funeral!”

“You are being irrational”

“You are the one who is irrational! She is still alive!”

“Stop hanging on to that notion!”

Childman pointed his finger to the grave, and said.

“I know she is dead, and the big shots think so too.”

Krylancelo pushed his hand.

“I don’t care about those people. You are just afraid of damaging the reputation of the Tower of Fang.”

“They ruled that she was a failure to the Tower of Fang, a stain”

A stain — — he heard that word again, he couldn’t help but grit his teeth.

“She is not a stain, she is the best black sorcerer this

tower has even seen. She could even use white magic — —”

“Yes, she was an outstanding scholar of magic.”

“Not was, she is! She’s still alive!”

Krylancelo glared at his teacher, but of them could not sway each other. But they could convince the people present.

Standing beside Childman was Hartia, who wore a worried look.

“Krylancelo, you can’t be serious— —”

“Why must you insist? Why do you still have the notion that she is still alive?!”

“You are the one of the top students here, and before long you could take first place. One day you could — —”

“Shut up, Hartia. You’ve got nothing to do with this!”

Krylancelo looked ferocious, he then turned his gaze to Childman.

“You want to bury an empty coffin. Or do you have something to place in the coffin!?”

“Me”

Childman’s face was dead serious, though it was kinda like a joke. After a brief pause, Krylancelo continued.

“No, me!”

“Are you serious?”

Everyone around them started whispering, Krylancelo ignored his question and continued shouting.

“Yes, I’ll gladly be buried together with Azalie! But she’s alive! I will find her, not matter how many years it will take. We were both orphans to begin with, and an Orphen I shall remain.”

Krylancelo — — no, Orphen pulled his shovel away from the coffin and lifted it into the air. Several people around him took a step back, but Childman didn’t even move a muscle. The strongest black

sorcerer in the continent spoke in a soft tone.

“You’ll find her — — she’s become a monster! Do you think a kiss will return her to normal?!”

“Stop playing around, Childman. I’ll find that magic sword and change her back to normal!”

“But you can’t — —”

Childman was suddenly serious. Though Orphen seems to be overwhelmed with his emotions.

“Are you implying that you can do better than me?”

“If I were in your position — —” Even though Childman maintained a calm expression, he suddenly stopped mid-sentence. He glanced over at the elders and then sighed.

“Shut up, you fool!”

“You think my idea is stupid?!”

“Come at me, you fool!”

“Oh, I’m ready.”

Orphen woke up from an unpleasant dream, and he

found himself inside a prison cell, Totokanta's police prison cell to be exact. Unpleasant grey walls stood around him, with iron bars barring his escape and a small barred window in his room. In the corner of the room were kettle and cups, though he was in no mood to drink, even though his throat was very dry. Since he woke up his head has been hurting, maybe someone hit him while he was sleeping.

His vision was blurry though he could make out Vulcan hiding his face from him, he was probably furious. Orphen slowly sat up and he could hear them muttering.

“Why are you up?”

Vulcan said as he turned around, his face was somewhat timid, though he was probably hiding his anger from him. Orphen was annoyed so he didn't even bother answering him.

“Let's make something clear!”

“I have nothing to say to you”

“Are you kidding!?”

Vulcan said as he grabbed Orphen’s collar. Though this was only because Orphen wasn’t standing, so if he was Vulcan wouldn’t be able to grab his collar unless he jumped. Vulcan continued to berate Orphen.

“Don’t ignore me! We’ve been here for three days already! Now listen, we’re going to be charged with fraud, disturbing law and order and damaging property!”

It goes without saying that they are suspects, even though they’ve probably been found guilty already. After the disturbance in the Everlasting estate, civil servants rushed to the scene. It seems that a neighbour called them after going to the scene, unsure of what was happening, they called the authorities. By the time they arrived, Orphen and the others didn’t escape so they ended up being caught and thrown in prison by the police.

On Orphen’s face appeared an ironic smile.

“At least we should only get charged with fraud.”

“Are you forgetting something, that giant monster! Everyone at the scene saw you talking to it — —”

Orphen immediately forcefully pulled Vulcan’s hand off his collar, and warned him.

“Listen to me, because I don’t like repeating myself — — and this is the last warning you’ll get. Don’t you dare call her a monster, you got that!?”

“Well, whatever you say.”

Vulcan said as he started stroking his arm.

Orphen stood up and put his back against the wall, as he gazed around the room. He was in trouble, and didn’t know where to start.

“.....I already knew you weren’t normal, but I didn’t expect that you were raised by a monster!”

Orphen and Vulcan glared at each other, but Vulcan just went back to touching his arm as he pretended that Orphen didn’t hurt him. Orphen began to talk slowly.

“I grew up in the Tower of Fang.”

Upon hearing that, Vulcan nervously breathed deeply — — The “Tower of Fang” was the continent’s highest magical institution. All the strongest sorcerer’s come from there, and they are used even in times of war. Vulcan spit out saliva due to excessive tension in his mouth, he then began to hold his breath.

“I’m not surprised a monster came from that place.”

“That’s not what I said!”

Orphen shouted, Vulcan lifted his leg as if to kick him but the guards took notice.

“Hey, what are you doing!?”

A smile faded over Orphen’s face as he waved to the guards.

“Ah, everything’s fine.”

“Is that so.....bastard.”

Orphen stood on Vulcan’s foot, and he let out a

squeal. But Orphen just ignored him and continued talking.

“Now listen, I grew up in the Tower of Fang but I was an Orphan before I joined them. Out of all the people who join, less than one percent of them graduate. Does that answer your question?”

“Kinda...but you didn’t need to stand on my foot! “

Vulcan complained, but Orphen simply ignored him and continued his story.

“In the Tower of Fang, most people were usually lonely or unfriendly. Mainly because the competition is so intense, and that makes it hard to find someone to confide in. Most people had one or two close friends, me, I had Azalie. She was five years older than me, and everyone called her a witch.”

“Well, was she hot or not? — — Ouch, that hurt!”

Orphen kicked Vulcan in the side with his boot, then continued the story.

“Yeah, she was beautiful, and everyone had the hots for her. After all, she was a skilled sorcerer. But then she tried to cast magic she couldn’t handle — —”

“And then what happened?”

Vulcan obviously had ulterior motives, it wasn’t just a casual interest.

“It backfired, she failed in her attempt. Then I left the Tower of Fang to find her, and I’ve been looking ever since”

“Yes, and thanks to my little plan you got to meet her again.” Vulcan muttered.

“I don’t intend to thank you, just hurry up and give me my money already!”

“You’re thinking about money in here?”

“I’ve been waiting for it ever since you borrowed it, or would you prefer I just keep stomping on your foot? Oh, and you’re lucky I’m not charging you for having to put up with your bullshit.”

Orphen said, as Vulcan took a step back and quietly

asked another question.

“Wait a second, so she was human to begin with?”

“Yes.”

Orphen nodded.

“I was there when she turned.....”

“Well, what kind of magic was it?”

“I don’t know”

Orphen said blankly.

“You don’t know?”

“Yeah, the transformation process was caused by some type of magic unknown to me. She did the entire process in secret, I still don’t understand it even to this day.”

“.....”

Thinking it a little more, he asked another question.

“So, you’re trying to turn her back into a human — — that’s why you’re on this journey?”

Orphen signed, and answered him in utter despair.

“That’s what I planned to do, but as long as she uses magic, I can’t get anywhere near her.”

“I see.”

Vulcan said, as he tried to rub out Orphen’s footprint off his rental suit. “Well, if it doesn’t work out you could always end her suffering, right?”

“You’ve got to be joking.”

Orphen said fiercely.

“What do you plan to do next?”

Vulcan asked, wanting more answers. Orphen ignored him and sat back on the ground. He then cracked his knuckles as if he was ready to use them, Vulcan responded with a defensive posture. But Orphen didn’t notice him, he sat alone, lost in thought.

(Azalie’s “stain” left upon the Tower of Fang is due to her failing the magical process, for which she payed the price. She thought she could understand if

she watched her own funeral — — but on that day, she lost all her friends.) Orphen closed his eyes again, he planned on getting as much rest as he could.

(In fact she was wrong, all the other's may have abandoned her. But not Orphen, he still believes in her.....)

But this time he wasn't dreaming. When Orphen began to open his eyes, he could see that the atmosphere inside the cell seems to have changed. Vulcan was quiet and wasn't on a rampage, but that was when Orphen noticed them. The guards were standing in front of their cell, with a certain petite girl who started to walk closer to him. She had a happy smiles on her face and put her hands on his back.

“Cleo?”

Orphen was surprised to say. The blonde girl showed up in the most unexpected of places, she then smiled and nodded.

“Why are you here?”

Orphen wasn't sure why, the girl had no reason to be here. However she didn't respond, she just went back to the guards and whispered something. The guard replied in a polite tone.

“Are you sure about this?”

The girl nodded and the guards removed themselves from the front of the cell.

“Cleo, why are you here?” Before asking another question, he let her answer. Even though they weren't on the best of terms, with the marriage fraud and the damage done to their house, he could tell that she had no ill intent.

“I'm getting you out of here.”

“What?!”

Orphen thought to himself. (There's no way she's here to rescue me)

“If I wanted to escape I could have that lock open in two seconds, though I don't really want to be a

wanted man again.”

“I’m sorry about all this. But my mother said that as long as we don’t press charges, you’re free to go.”

“Yeah, but what about the whole fraud thing, and the damage to your home. I’m guessing you want some sort of compensation, am I right?”

Cleo nodded.

“That’s what mother said. But we’re willing to forgive you.”

“Wow, thank you so much!”

Vulcan said in a loud voice. The little guy had saw the light in a desperate situation, he started worshipping Cleo on the spot as if she were some goddess.

Orphen sitting beside him asked.

“Why? You don’t owe us anything, or does your mother still think I’m a rich entrepreneur?”

Orphen was originally going to make a joke, but Cleo

just shook her head.

“No, we just want to help.”

“What is it you really want?”

Orphen said flatly.

“Well, we saw you use magic...”

“Yeah, but — —” A faint smile began to appear on Orphen’s face.

“If you want to hire a black sorcerer, you’ll have to pay me.”

“Hey, sorcerer!”

Vulcan hurriedly shouted, but Orphen ignored him and stared straight at Cleo. The girl shrugged.

“Name your price.”

“Well that depends on what my abilities are needed for, though first of all, could you take care of our rental clothing. We’ve probably got a fine to pay for them.”

“Ah, I’ve got just the thing, this should be enough.”

Cleo put a small ring into his right hand, Orphen was lost for words.

“.....”

“Well?”



A smirk appeared on her face, Orphen took a closer look at the ring.

“Do you know how much this ring is worth?”

“Who knows, but the ring design is very simple and

Cleo didn't understand a word he was saying, she just looked confused. A silver ring is very common, and is consistent with a girl's taste. It was inlaid with gravel-like transparent gems, the workmanship was very sophisticated. Looking closer he could see traces of text that had been carved.

Orphen sighed — —

“It's very old, it's probably more than a thousand years old. Can you read the inscribed text?”

Now Orphen was interested, he stared for a while at the small text but ultimately gave up.

“I can't read it. But I'm sure about one thing, no race on this continent uses this type of text.”

“Yeah me neither, but I have seen this ring or something like it somewhere before — —”

Orphen suddenly realized something, he wondered why he didn't notice it right away. “Wait a minute, Cleo. This ring is from the Tower of Fang! How did you get this?”

Orphen suddenly stood up, startled by this action Cleo began to look a little embarrassed, she whispered to him.

“I don't remember. But, I've always had it in a little box where I keep my jewelry since I was a child. I can't remember when I first got it.....”

“This is from the Tower of Fang, I'm not joking. No one steals anything from there, not even a hairpin”

“I didn't steal it!”

“I know that. However, this ring in your possession has magical powers — — it's different from normal magic, it uses an ancient magic.”

“Can't you at least read part of it?”

Cleo asked, Orphen faced a difficult answer.

“I can only read part of the text, it says something about power.”

“Good grief, I hope it isn’t evil magic.”

Cleo was a little worried, but Orphen continued.

“This ring clearly bears a powerful force, maybe it can be controlled?”

Orphen began to carefully examine the ring, meanwhile Cleo was slightly trembling.

“You can keep it. Consider it payment for your services.”

“Yeah, but we can’t pay for our rental clothing with this. Though we could trade it in for some cash.”

“That’s fine by me.”

As if horrified, Cleo took a step back. Orphen intended to put the ring onto one of his fingers, but it wouldn’t fit. He put it into his pocket instead.

“Well, that’s one thing out of the way.”

“Great. Though, there is one thing that is troubling my mother.” “What is it?”

Orphen knew he wouldn’t like the answer, Cleo got to the point.

“Someone wants to kill our family.”

*

“Inside your house is the sword of baltanders. If you do not surrender the sword, risk will come to you and your family. To prevent such measures, surrender the sword by — —”

The deadline is today. The letter didn’t specify a place or a time to meet. So in other words, they will take the initiative to remove the sword from the house.

“The Sword of Baltanders?” Orphen felt superior as he held the letter, since he had the duty of asking questions. Vulcan, Cleo and Tishtiny stood around

him. Mariabelle choose to stay in her room. Orphen and Vulcan returned their rental clothing, namely in exchange for their original clothes. Orphen was dressed in his usual black sorcerer getup with dark color tones, Vulcan was wearing his tattered fur cloak and carried his sword in his holster. Him and his brother had a lot of suspicious looking luggage, prior to arriving Orphen warned him about bringing his weapon with him. But Tishtiny didn't seem to care, she was more concerned with entertaining her guests with great hospitality.

Orphen didn't know if Tishtiny cared about the marriage fraud ordeal, when they returned to the Everlasting residence the woman's face didn't show a sign of displeasure. Though it seemed her trust in them hadn't changed. Although the incident didn't cause any damage, the unidentified object that crashed through the wall into her daughters room did. She may have believed that Orphen and that monster were in league with each other, nevertheless Tishtiny answered Orphen in a calmly

manner.

“We received the letter two days ago.”

(The day Orphen met Azalie)

Orphen continued to ask questions.

“Have you informed the police?”

“No, because we couldn’t find the sword...”

“You couldn’t find it?”

If she didn’t know the meaning behind the threatening letter, then she may have not understood the marriage fraud. However, it seems she isn’t concerned about that anymore.

“Yes, we looked everywhere.”

“They must have a reason for knowing that it’s here, it could be hidden somewhere in the mansion without you knowing.”

“Is that so? Well, when the master of the house was alive he did like to collect valuable items. This Sword of Baltanders.....could be somewhere in his

collection. However I'm not certain.

"Where do you keep his collection?"

"In the underground warehouse, we'll lead you there soon."

Orphen looked at Tishtiny as he held the letter in his hand, she had a grim look. In fact when Cleo came to get him, he thought it would be Azalie related.

However, he came only to find a threatening letter, it's obvious that Azalie didn't write it. Vulcan asked Tishtiny a question, in a rather professional manner.

"What about that bird monster?"

Orphen glared fiercely at Vulcan, but he had his back to him. Vulcan didn't see him do this but Tishtiny did, she still remember when Orphen was shouting at the monster. Even she had questions for him, but that was for another time.

"It hasn't shown up since then, do you think it's connected to the letter?"

"Of course, don't you think it's a coincidence that

both that monster and letter arrived on the same day?”

Vulcan looked serious. Even though Vulcan asked the question, Orphen stole his thunder.

“How did the letter arrive?”

“I woke up and found it on my dresser.”

“It could have been magic.”

After listening to the words of Orphen, Tishtiny nodded.

“But why magic?”

Orphen interjected.

“If it was a normal kind of threat, the letter would have been sent by mail courier. But they deliberately choose this conspicuous manner, the logical answer is magic.”

“I see.”

Tishtiny replied. Then Orphen suddenly thought of Azalie.

“Can you please take me to the underground warehouse?”

Orphen said. Tishtiny nodded.

“Cleo will go with you. I’ll stay with Mariabelle, she’s still a bit shaken.....”

“That would be wise.”

Orphen expressed concern. Then he heard a burst of laughter coming from Cleo, Orphen didn’t understand the reason why, but Tishtiny did. She also covered her mouth with her fingers, revealing a faint smile.

(Why would she laugh at a time like this?)

Though Orphen didn’t bother to ask, then Cleo grabbed his hand.

“This way.”

Cleo said in a rather friendly tone. It was as if Orphen had a sister again, it was a wonderful feeling. And with Cleo pulling Orphen in tow, they left the living room.

Orphen speculated that the stairs to the basement would be located within the house, Cleo reassured him. They descended the stairs and they could feel cold air touching their cheeks. Naturally there are no windows to light the way, so Cleo flipped a switch to activate the gas lights.

“You have such a device in your home?”

Orphen asked. Cleo proudly pushed up her small breasts.

“My father liked this sort of thing, he even got tap water installed.”

“I surrender.”

Orphen raised his hands, and Cleo happily laughed.

The stairs finally reached the door. The door looks like it's been reinforced, it's a little rusty and dusty. Although it may have some history to it, there was a metal plate on the door which seemed fairly new.

“To get through this door, you need to give up hope.”

Orphen was surprised to read the text on the metal

plate. Cleo again pushed up her chest and whispered.

“Father always did have poor taste.”

Orphen muttered to himself, since he was flabbergasted that they had running water in their household. When they got to the door they started to slowly open it, for some reason it wasn't locked.

The warehouse was filled with a variety of items. There were rows of paintings and bookshelves full of books, when Orphen finally got a full view of the room he was really unimpressed. He had the wrong impression about the place, the floor was all dusty and the carpet was the same as the one in the living room. It was hard to believe that most of the items were in great condition, that was mostly because the warehouse had ventilation.

“Actually...”

Cleo frankly said with a mischievous voice.

“I took that ring from here. My sister has so many

rings but I wanted something special.”

“From here...?”

Orphen muttered, then he entered the warehouse.

The warehouse didn't have any gas lamps, and the light from the passage barely lit the place.

Orphen looked around, and he saw that there were two rows of infantryman guns. The guns were filthy and covered with dust, by just looking at them he could see the exquisite workmanship that was poured into them. Though they didn't look like battle weapons, but more like props. They probably have a long history to them.

(One gun alone is worth a small fortune.)

Orphen sighed, he knew the search would be a tedious one. The warehouse must hold more than guns and artwork. He looked around and saw a tapestry with some damage to it, but as long as it's repaired it should fetch a good price on the black market. Seeing such valuables piled around him, he

couldn't help but stand in awe.

“.....Do you see any swords?”

Orphen asked. Cleo starting waving her hand.

“I think they're over there.”

Orphen saw her pointing, what he saw was a huge pile of swords that seemed to be thrown on top of each other. It was a literal mountain of swords, there was possibly a hundred swords or more in the pile. It seems like the warehouse was originally a burial ground for unused swords.

“We'll never find the sword of baltanders, it's like a needle in a haystack.”

“Well, why don't you get started then?”

Orphen slapped Cleo in the back of the head.

“If you want to do look for it then be my guest. But I'm not gonna find it for the robber, we should catch him in the act!”

“If you say so...”

Orphen hoped that this would work out, though nobody could really guess what would happen next. Though if Azalie really does have something to do with the letter, what could it be? Orphen was clueless.

*

“Why do we have to do this?”

Hiding in the courtyard at night, Vulcan and Dortin were complaining non-stop.

(My brother borrowed money from some sorcerer and then he came up with a plan to bring it back. Then his marriage fraud plan got us involved with some monster and now he wants us to capture some robber. When will it end!) Still dragging behind Vulcan was Dortin with his huge backpack. In fact, the backpack was full of books. Although most of them are written in the human language, there are also some ancient language books mixed in with

them. Compared to ordinary books, these books are actually quite large. But out of all the books in the house, their lot was actually quite small when compared.

(Home — —)

Dortin sighed and began to reminisce. He hasn't been home in many years. Although he thought about returning home many times, he couldn't muster the courage. It's been hard on him, since he hasn't seen his relatives or parents in so long. Since his brother Vulcan ran away from home and dragged him with him. He always thought that he was the most unlucky person in the world — — since he always ended up sleeping by the riverside or in the street. Just like a child living on the streets, he had to resort to stealing bread from time to time. Even so, he still retained a strong mental condition. He sighed again. Looking around the moonlit courtyard he saw a vast beautiful garden, with oak trees that run up the middle of the garden. There

was no pool — — mostly due to the ongoing water shortage, only noble families in Totokanta owned swimming pools or stored water. Just then Vulcan came running up to him.

“Hey, keep your eyes peeled. You have to keep your guard up!”

(Why am I the lookout?)

Dortin always received the short end of the stick. That’s why a lot of the time he disagreed with Vulcan, at least in his mind he does.

“Do a good job this time and I won’t have to strangle you with a rope, you got that?”

Dortin just nodded.

He instead turning his attention to his surroundings. The cool breeze of air made him more comfortable, though his ears pricked up when he heard the wind rustling the branches of the trees.

Woah ~ ahhhh

The earth itself seemed to shake to the galloping

hooves of some beast. It seemed far away, but he could hear it getting closer by the second.

“What’s going on?”

Vulcan heard the galloping too, he panicked and pulled out his sword.

“Alert!” Convinced that this was an unusual situation he fled in the direction of the house. No matter how much he hated the black sorcerer Orphen, he was at least more reliable than his sword.

“Alert!”

Dortin continued shouting Alert until Vulcan knocked him on the head with his sword.

“What was that for?”

Vulcan straightened his back and began to sneer.

“Listen up, I’ve thought of another brilliant plan.”

He started talking in a lower tone.

“If we call that damn black sorcerer out, then he’ll

use his fancy magic and steal all the credit. But if we capture the robber ourselves, then I'll get the reward."

(Doesn't he mean "we'll get the reward?")

However, Vulcan didn't seem to notice.

"And when we get the reward, we'll hire an assassin to take out that damn sorcerer once and for all!"

"But shouldn't we use that money to pay off our debt to him?"

"Don't be stupid! How many times has he tortured us?! If we give the money to him then all our pain and suffering will be for nothing!"

"I guess you're right."

"Of course I'm right! We can't throw in the towel! I will not have a stain on Volcano Vulcan's record! I'll send that stupid black sorcerer right to hell!"

And just as he finished his sentence, Vulcan was kicked to the ground.

“What the hell was that for?”

“I didn’t do it!”

But then both of them realized there was another person beside them, it was Orphen. The black sorcerer always appears quietly, he probably used black magic to mask his approach. Orphen grabbed him by the collar, even though he remained silent at first — — there was a burning rage inside of him.

“You’ll send me to hell, will you?”

“That’s not true, I was only trying to get you out here!”

“I heard it all.”

“No! My plan is ruined, this is all your fault Dortin!”

“But I...”

Vulcan as usual tried to push to blame onto someone else, but just then, a laugh echoed throughout the courtyard.

“Wow ~ Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha

“Who’s there?”

Orphen started to look around. He glanced around to the dark corners of the courtyard but could see no one, even with his great eyesight at night time.

“You’re looking at the wrong place! I’m up here!”

“What?”

It was obvious that the voice came from the mansions rooftop.

A huge figure appeared in front of the moon, standing on the roof. It appeared to be three meters tall, but it was clear that this was different from the last monster.

“Who the hell are you?!”

Vulcan shouted, as if he was the leader in this situation.



Standing on the rooftop, the shadowed figure laughed for a moment, then began his speech.

“I am the assassin who lives in the night! I have a covenant with the night and by day, I live hiding my face, I am the embodiment of fear and evil! Of the House of Demonic Dreams, my name is — — Black Tiger!”

“So it’s the Black Tiger?!”

Vulcan began to mutter behind Orphen.

“Do you know this guy?”

Orphen ignored him and started to open his mouth to speak but the mysterious figure lunged into the air.

“Ha!”

With the night time stars as his background, the mysterious figure flashy landed into the courtyard.

With a loud “boom” the figure that fell to the ground was not a monster, but a human — — he was

wearing a dark coloured costume, with a black mask tightly wrapped around his face. Through the eye holes on his mask you could see that his eyes were a burning passion. He was like a picture of death himself, holding a giant scythe riding a giant bull. Since he was riding an animal, it made him look taller, just about three metres to be exact. If it wasn't for the bull, his height would be that of a normal man.

With his crimson cloak fluttering in the wind, he looked like some kind of superhero. But everyone else had another opinion.

(This guy looks like a sicko.)

With clenched fists, it was easy to decide.

(No doubt about it, he's a pervert.)

Everyone else got a good look at his face, even Vulcan agreed with him, though he was a little more dumbfounded and in disarray.

The Black Tiger continued shouting.

“Ha ha ha! I didn’t expect anyone to actually know my name!”

“Black Tiger.....but isn’t your name Shrimp man!?”

Everyone stood still for a moment. The Black Tiger didn’t even reply, he just sat there like a statue. Orphen seemed lost in thought, and Vulcan quickly pulled his sword out of his scabbard. A pleasant breeze began to blow by, but even still, nobody moved.

*

“Uh.....”

Vulcan began to speak.

“Hey, Shrimp man!”

“Who is this Shrimp man?!”

Black Tiger roared loudly. But Vulcan just simply pointed right at him.

“Whether you are a weirdo or a downright idiot, it doesn’t matter! I won’t allow you to survive!”

“You dare oppose the invincible assassin known as Black Tiger!”

“Shrimp man!”

The mysterious man and his bull rose up, and just as it roared the Black Tiger swung his sickle at Vulcan and hit him. Vulcan didn’t have time to scream, as he was sent to the other side of the courtyard.

“Big Brother!”

Dortin shouted. Orphen took a step in the direction of Vulcan, where he could see him rubbing his head while staring at the Black Tiger across the courtyard.

“You bastard, that hurt!”

The Black Tiger turned the bull in his direction, as both of them roared.

“You should have been killed! But don’t worry, next time I’ll smash your skull wide open.”

However before Vulcan raised his sword, the Black Tiger's voice pierced the night sky.

“Lightning!”

A large crackling sound was heard from the sky, and a burst of lightning hit in front of Vulcan's feet, knocking him down. After the smoke cleared, Dorton ran over to Vulcan and helped up to his feet.

“Magic, he used magic!”

Vulcan said with a trembling voice.

Orphen finally regained his senses. He began to roll up his sleeves, as to draw the attention of the Black Tiger. Orphen wanted to finish this quickly, and didn't want to have to kill him. In order to find out how Azalie is involved with this, he needed to capture his enemy without killing him.

Even though his opponent was wearing a mask, he noticed what Orphen was doing.

“You won't defeat me that easily, black sorcerer.”

(He noticed me.)

Orphen was surprised, he obviously knew he was going to use magic.

“I know you will use magic, the Black Tiger is all knowing after all.”

“So it seems you’ve done some research about me, so let’s get started.”

Orphen grinned and stuck out his hand towards the Black Tiger.

“Sword of Light, whom I do release!”

“Hey, wait a second!”

The Black Tiger screamed as Orphen’s attack bounced off his scythe.

“Hungry for more?!”

Orphen fired the same attack at him again, as the waves of light and heat flew towards his opponent. However in the face of such an attack, the Black Tiger erected a barrier of light to protect himself. Vulcan was watching their duel from the sidelines with an ecstatic face, he always wanted to see two

sorcerers fight it out. Few people can continuously release magic, Orphen is just some of them.

“Sword of Light, whom I do release!”

Bright flashes of light lit up the courtyard, and set many of the oak trees alight. The Black Tiger’s magic spell seemed to only guard against magic attacks and not flaming trees, so naturally his cape caught fire.

“I’m on fire!” “Sword of Light, whom I do release!”

His magic attacks continued to hit the magical barrier, flames were sent flying everywhere. The damage to the courtyard was immense, and ash was flying around in the air.

(Strange.)

Orphen thought.

(Why isn’t this guy retreating? Is he just some kind of distraction, or is there someone else out there who is watching this duel. Like a master, I’ve got to get to the bottom of this.) Orphen then immediately

turned to the house, and started shouting.

“Hey, you over there! Deal with for will ya!”

Orphen started running, while screams erupted behind him.

“Wait a minute, how am I meant to deal with this guy?!”

Orphen bursted into the house. He should have noticed it, Black Tiger was part of something bigger. But if he was the distraction, then the master must be somewhere in the house.

Orphen had to confirm the safety of the three ladies in the household, he first checked up on Cleo’s room. She was still asleep, like a little puppy curled up in a ball on the bed. Next he went to Tishtiny’s room, she was wearing her pyjamas and started to put a cloak on. She must have been woken by the explosions, Orphen wasn’t familiar with the mansion and he went to Mariabelle’s previous room which was damaged by the monster. But he forgot that her room was moved to the third floor, he then rushed

up the stairs and kicked her door down.

It was a dark room — — moonlight was coming in from one of the windows, giving some light. There wasn't much furniture in the room, leaving many empty open spaces. However, in the middle of the room there was two figures. One of them was Mariabelle, and the other person was dressed just like the Black Tiger.

Underneath the man's mask was an icy cold voice, and he held a sharp knife at Mariabelle's throat. He didn't even bother to react to Orphen's entrance, he just asked the same question that he asked her before in a weary voice.

“Where is the sword of baltanders?”

Mariabelle didn't answer. Her face was frozen with terror, while she stood quietly.

Orphen yelled to the man.

“Stop right there!”

He eyes tracked Orphen's movements, however the

knife still remained on Mariabelle's throat.

(He's got a hostage. Damn...)

Orphen cursed his own incompetence, and got ready to use magic.

However, the man suddenly pushed Mariabelle away, and pointed the knife at Orphen.

(He deliberately released his hostage?)

However, this was no time to be surprised. The guy lunged at Orphen, and struck his chest. Leaving Orphen temporarily stunned.

“Fly.”

Orphen was sent flying across the room towards the entrance, where he rolled into the hallway.

(Magic!)

Orphen watched the man staring at him through his mask.

(I didn't expect to deal with two people who could use magic in one night.)

“Are you okay?”

Standing in the hallway, Tishtiny ran towards him. She tried to help Orphen to his feet.

“Get your daughter out of here!”

Orphen said, Tishtiny nodded. However when she got to the entrance she stood still, as she saw the man in black. Orphen wasn't in good shape. (That guy...he's way stronger than me.....) Orphen took a deep breath.

“Sword that has conquered demons I brandish”

Orphen went on the attack, and his opponent jumped back in anticipation. Orphen's magical sword disappeared and he then pointed his right hand at the man and shouted.

“Ominous starling of death guiding me”

The air around him started to shake, an ultrasonic wave flew past him and hit the curtain behind him, blowing it to pieces. It was now a pile of rags, but the man was unharmed. He must have raised some sort

of defensive shield in an instance.

Orphen could faintly see a smile on the man's face through his mask. He then raised his knife, and pointed it to the side.

“Amber shield from my fingertips.”

Orphen started chanting a mantra, the air in front of him was becoming compressed. Although this only slowed down the man's attack. Suddenly the distance between the two was shortening, but this time the man didn't strike with his hand, but with the knife. It plunged into Orphen's chest, however, he was smiling.

(He took the bait!)

“I spin thee, armor of light!”

Orphen moved in for the kill and hit the guy, sending him flying into the back of the wall. The knife flew out of his hands.

“Well, let's end this.”

Orphen moved slowly towards the man, who let out

a groan as he tried to stand up. Orphen cautiously picked up the knife and pointed it at the man.

However, Orphen surprisingly dropped the knife.

“You...”

The man stood up, revealing that parts of his mask were burnt out. He looked about thirty years old, he was a cruel and emotionless man.

“You’ve become strong, Krylancelo.”

“Childman!”

But as soon as the knife touched the ground, he was gone. He didn’t even notice him moving, until he saw a shadow leap out the window.

“Why are you really here?! Childman!”

Orphen hurried over to Mariabelle, who had her eyes closed tightly. She clung to his arms, she was still trembling with fear. But Orphen could only think of Childman, who by now was long gone.

Orphen turned his gaze to the courtyard, which was

covered in ashes. The two brothers Vulcan and Dortin were covered in ash, and were squabbling amongst each other, probably trying to pin the blame on each other. Orphen let out a sigh.

Tishtiny ran into the room and rushed to the side of Mariabelle.

“Childman? He’s the strongest Black Sorcerer on this continent! He should be at the Tower of Fang, why did he appear here?”

No one answered as Orphen muttered to himself. Meanwhile Tishtiny was comforting her daughter, while the two brothers were fighting it out in the courtyard as a gentle breeze blew by.

— — “You can’t do it. But I can.” — —

Childman recalled a memory, this specific one wouldn’t leave him alone. It just kept playing over and over in his head.

Chapter 3: Shrimp Man's Counterattack

Face to face, Orphen pulled Cleo's arm and patiently explained.

"I've already told you, they're just acquaintances of mine."

"That's a lie. Why would such a big shot like him be in this town? Or, did you anger them somehow and they've come for revenge!"

"They're just acquaintances of mine, that's all."

It's been a day since the midnight attack — — Orphen had a talk with the Everlasting's about leaving the city. If they stay in their house, those guys — — especially Childman could strike again, Orphen wasn't sure if he could successfully protect everyone. Therefore, they took his opinion into consideration.

So, Orphen, Vulcan, Dortin and Cleo made their way to the Totokanta Branch of Sorcerer's, to get some answers.

“Those acquaintances of yours can use magic!”

Dragging multiple large leather bags, Orphen pondered on why they were so heavy. However, he didn't seem to notice that Vulcan was sitting on the bags.

Orphen nodded.

“Both of them are formidable opponents.”

He stood across from a magnificent door, carved into the door was two women facing each other, offering prayers.

This place is a sorcerer's organisation.

(Note: Damsels' Orisons, Maiden's Prayer) This is the origin of their name.

Inscribed on the door was some information.

“Totokanta Branch of Sorcerer's.”

If this place was in the city, the building would have been mistaken as a fortress. It's grey walls reaching ever upwards.

Still looking at the scene in front of him, Cleo took the chance to ask something.

"Hey, can we go in?"

"I can, but you can't."

"What, but why not?"

"Because they don't take too kindly to non-magic users."

Cleo started to get frustrated.

"Then why did you bother bringing us out here?"

"I didn't want you to come. Heck, I even told you this information before we left your house. But you insisted to come."

"Alright, I understand."

Cleo grumbled as she let go of Orphen's arm.

Orphen's arm was now free, he then turned in the

opposite direction. Vulcan and Dortin had no intention to step into this unknown fortress, though they did seem to be very concerned about it. Orphen asked them to take care of Cleo while he went inside.

“I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

Orphen opened the door and headed inside the building, stepping on the broad stone steps, he took a deep breath and made up his mind. He knew that they don’t take too kindly to non-magic users, but what attitude will they take towards him.

Orphen waited in the visitor’s room for over an hour, and just when his stomach started to growl, they finally brought him out of the small room. They moved him through the long dark corridors, until they finally reached their destination. Or at least that’s what Orphen thought, they just brought him to another room.

“Please wait here a moment.”

Orphen didn’t complain, he simply nodded his head.

This room was a little more comfortable than the last, though this room is on the lowest level of the building. Just as Orphen sighed, he entered the room. There was no introduction given for this sorcerer, this place must be the interrogation room and him its keeper, the man only asked for identification.

Orphen took out the silver necklace from his chest, a sign of the Tower of Fang.

Sitting on a hard bench in the corner of the room, Orphen breathed deeply. The gas lamp on the ceiling was completely unreliable, as it shed very little light.

Like the interior of the building, it was dark and there was no windows in most rooms. The floor was covered with dust, and footprints were clearly marked on the ground, Orphen's footprints. Even though there was only one pair of footprints, he couldn't tell how many times he walked in them for the entire time he was locked in here.

Thirty minutes later, someone came in the room.

“Krylancelo!”

An astonished voice resounded throughout the room. Orphen lifted his face up, he saw a red haired man standing at the door with a lively expression.

“Hartia.”

Orphen said with no emotion.

The red-haired man didn't seem to mind, he quickly entered the room.

“I saw the name Orphen on the visitor's list, isn't Krylancelo good enough for you. Though I'm more interested in why you came to a place like this.”

“I noticed.”

Orphen stood up from the bench, and gently shook Hartia's stretched out hand. Hartia had a strong grip, meanwhile Orphen closely watched his reaction.

“You haven't changed a bit.”

Both of them stared at each other's faces, and then

both of them started to smile. But then Hartia's smile quickly disappeared.

"You've changed a lot."

Hartia softly whispered.

However, Hartia's expression soon turned serious as he redacted his hand.

"So, how are you getting along?"

"I'm just surviving, literally."

Orphen sarcastically replied, Hartia really didn't know how to reply.

"So, I guess you're happy with the path you've taken?"

"Yeah, nothing beat's the welfare system. Besides, since I've left the Tower of Fang my life has actually become quite prosperous."



“Oh, I didn’t know that. I just thought you got by doing odd jobs.”

Hartia had a smirk on his face, with his freckles in full view.

“Though, since you left the Tower of Fang it seems the place has lost it’s motivation. Maybe the rift between you two has done more damage than first thought.”

“Maybe...”

A moment of silence passed between them.

“Shouldn’t you be going home to the Tower?”

“No I’ve got business here.”

Orphen stared coldly at Hartia.

“In fact, I’m looking for someone.”

“Who are you looking for?”

“My former Teacher, Childman.”

“Teacher?”

Hartia wore an unexpected expression, Orphen then explained that he was now a bodyguard at the Everlasting household, and that last night Childman attacked the residence.

“Teacher? You must be mistaken. He would never do such an act — —”

“Yes, it’s true. And I think Childman is somewhere inside this branch.”

“If that’s the case, then I haven’t seen him. This place is very large after all.”

“You better not be hiding him.”

“Krylancelo!”

Hartia’s eye’s suddenly lit up.

“I’m sorry about Azalie, but take what you are saying more seriously — —”

“Hartia — —”

Orphen opened his mouth — — he considered talking in a cold voice just like Childman.

“Hartia. I didn’t mention Azalie.”

“You knew it was coming. I thought you were my friend.”

“I thought so too.”

Orphen finished, Hartia then snorted.

“You clearly don’t believe me.”

“How can I believe you when I know for a fact that you are lying, don’t take me for a fool.”

“I’m sorry, I’ve got to go. I have work to attend to.”

Hartia turned to leave the room. However, Orphen grabbed him by the shoulder.

“.....What do you want, Krylancelo?”

Hartia didn’t look back as he asked.

Orphen said quietly.

“My name is Orphen. The Krylancelo you knew is gone!”

“You’ve always been stubborn, if you continue like

this you'll lose more friends, Krylancelo." Hartia finished, then walked out of the room.

Orphen stood in the centre of the room for a while, looking at time passing on the clock. As he watches it pass, until the pointer directly points at one in the afternoon.

*

"Hey, you two!"

She stirred her glass of orange juice with a straw, Cleo complained that it was running low. The time was fifteen minutes to two o'clock. After Orphen left, Cleo found a juice shop, where she and the two dwarfs have been waiting for two hours. Cleo kept herself entertained with an old book and the juice, which was running low. Though when she asked for a refill Vulcan sneakily started diluting her drink instead of buying another one, much to the dismay of the bar staff. The bar was located across from the

Totokanta Branch of Sorcerer's.

“Just what is keeping Orphen?”

“That sorcerer has no concept of time.”

Vulcan replied as he chewed ice with his strong jaws. Meanwhile, Cleo frustratingly flipped through the pages.

Cleo seemed worried about black sorcerer.

“Do you think he could have got into some trouble?”

Vulcan nodded.

“It's not impossible. A lot of people really despise that guy.”

“Is that right?”

Cleo said, as Vulcan's arrogant tone continued.

“Yeah, he used to do a lot of pickpocketing, and even sometimes got beat up by the vegetable shop owner.”

However, this was more of a ghost of Vulcan's past, he just didn't want to say it.

“I’ve also heard him talking about evil monsters, and I saw him slitting a chicken’s throat once.”

“Really?” “Yeah, he is a cruel man.”

Reminiscing about home, Vulcan couldn’t help but feel homesick. However, he wasn’t the sentimental type.

“I don’t mean to bad mouth him, but having such a man under your employ with only harm your family’s reputation.”

“Do you want me to fire Orphen?”

“Yes.”

Vulcan said as he nodded.

“If you need proof, just look at the bottom of the bed that he used. There should be a large quantity of feathers.”

Vulcan hoped that his little scheme would pay off, but Cleo wasn’t reacting the way he had hoped.

“Oh...”

She mumbled.

“I’m going to the bathroom.”

She left her seat and went into the cafe. Meanwhile, Dortin asked Vulcan a question.

“Brother, where did you get all those feathers?”

“I tore up one of the Everlasting’s pillows.”

Vulcan replied, as he proudly beat his chest.

“You didn’t have to rip open a pillow just to get feathers.”

CRASH!

A big glass table that was sitting beside the brother’s was suddenly hit by a big piece of stone, both of them screamed and started hugging each other.

“Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!”

Laughter echoed throughout the street.

“It’s shrimp man!”

Table glass and debris flew around the place, juice

splashed into people's faces. The front desk unexpectedly collapsed, the entire store fell into a state of panic. Even pedestrians across the street fled in terror, all except a single employee who stood motionless holding a tray.

At this point — — Cleo rushed out of the store.

“What’s going on?”

Thinking to herself, she cursed herself for not washing her hands. Never less, the girl ran like lightning.

“It’s that guy from last time!”

“I wouldn’t know that, I never saw him.”

Cleo then tried to pull Vulcan’s sword out of his scabbard.

“Wait a moment, Miss.”

She just ignored his protest and yanked it from him. Cleo then ran over to the motionless employee and took his tray, using it as a shield.

“...as you wish.”

The man dressed in black emerged from the shadows, ready to challenge Cleo.

“Bring it on!”

Cleo screamed as she charged her opponent, but the Black Tiger quickly slipped out of view.

“Where did he go?”

“Look out!”

Today was different, this time he had no bull, but nevertheless he was menacing. Though the manager of the store wasn't afraid of him, he was only afraid of paying for all the damage.

“Hey, Miss. That sword is mine — —”

Vulcan tried to grab the sword from Cleo, but she just gave him a good whack in the head. He seemed to be knocked out.

“Come near me and I'll beat you too, Shrimp man!”

“Enough of this foolishness. Where is the black

sorcerer?!”

“He’s not here.”

“Then where is he?”

“Who knows!?”

Vulcan interjected, waking up from his unconsciousness.

“No one is born bad! You must have experienced a bad upbringing, even a weirdo such as yourself should know this. Nevertheless, I Volcano Vulcan will defeat you!”

“You don’t even have a weapon, how can you defeat me?!”

Cleo watched the two shout at each other.

“Enough of your nonsense, where is the black sorcerer?”

“Don’t treat me like an idiot, you shrimp man!”

“I’ve had enough of you!”

His bull came out of nowhere and the Black Tiger

jumped onto it. At the same time he started chanting, then a pillar of fire appeared beside him. Vulcan screamed in terror as the bull started yelling and shouting a mist of smoke out of its nostrils. The bull glared at Vulcan, quaking in his boots he then hid behind Cleo.

Cleo slowly took steps toward the Black Tiger, her hands tightly gripping her sword in a fighting pose.

“You’ve got guts, you want to challenge me?”

The Black Tiger equipped his sickle. Even if Cleo had received sword training, it wouldn’t save her.

“Swoosh”

The Black Tiger swung his sickle but Cleo was slightly out of reach, so he fell from his mount. Cleo had to think fast, her opponent was obviously more skilled, but she was faster. Immediately he sprung from the ground and went right for her, but she dodged his second attack. The two brothers just watched from the sidelines.

“This girl is amazing!”

“Yeah, but she’s not mature enough.”

(She was still stronger than them two.)

Even though both of them are physically different, only one of them was lacking actual combat experience. A minute into the battle, Cleo’s face was pale while her opponent had a steadfast resolve. This was mostly due to Cleo not being used to this kind of thing, though she was looking more petite than usual.

Looking closer, the Black Tiger could tell that her shoulders were trembling. She couldn’t go on the offensive, leaving the next move up to the Black Tiger.

“Sword of Light, whom I do release!”

Suddenly a wave of light and heat exploded between Cleo and the Black Tiger, it was so big that it even affected the nearby juice shop. Both of them could barely see, but Cleo could see that Vulcan was using

Dortin as a human shield to protect himself from the blast.

“Brother, let me go!”

“Don’t worry, we’ll die together.”

Just then, Orphen suddenly busted through a broken window. He then pulled Vulcan to his feet and asked him a question. But he couldn’t really hear him since his ears were still ringing from the explosion.

“What’s going on?”

He then saw Cleo on her feet with a sword, who yelled for his attention.

“Get over here!”

Orphen rushed over to her aid.

“You’ve done a good job so far, though I didn’t know you could use a sword.”

“I took some classes. I’m actually pretty good.”

Cleo said, as she stuck her chest out, obviously proud of her accomplishment.

“I’ve been waiting for you to appear.”

“How was I supposed to know you’d be at a juice shop?”

They were like two lover’s bickering.

“Never mind, let’s kick this guy’s ass.”

The Black sorcerer said as he picked an item that the Black Tiger must have dropped when he fell from his bull. It was a silver pendant — — a dragon wrapped around a sword. The emblem of the Tower of Fang.

Chapter 4: Baltanders

“Oh.....”

Orphen whispered softly with his hand to his chin, he then turned to face Cleo.

“It’s not this one.”

“Okay, but why don’t we start organizing them while we search. This place is a mess.”

Orphen thought so too.

In order to find the sword, they’ve got to finish cleaning and tidying the warehouse.

“It seems those guys didn’t find it either.”

“So in other words, the sword of Baltanders is still among all these hundreds of swords?”

“Yeah, and there’s got to be more than 800 swords here, you’re father sure bought a lot.”

“Anyway, even if it takes all day we’ve got to find

that sword before Childman does.”

Cleo handed Orphen a piece of paper.

“I found this outside the entrance to the warehouse. I haven’t told mother about it yet, should I?”

Orphen started reading it, with the gas lamp lighting the page.

“Ready the sword.”

He knew he had to be ready this time.

“We should tell your mother about this, we don’t need any more commotion than necessary.”

Cleo listened to him nervously, and asked.

“Do you think that guy we met today wrote it?”

“No, it was probably Childman. Since we were busy with the Black Tiger, he probably snuck in here and tried looking for it but couldn’t find it. Hence the letter.”

“Isn’t that guy a strong sorcerer?”

“Yes, and he was my teacher. They say he is the

strongest black sorcerer on the continent, a force to be reckoned with, a genuine killer.

“

Hearing this, Cleo started to bite her nails. She wanted to say something, but was too nervous to speak.

“Is something wrong?”

“Nothing.....it’s just that guy is from the Tower of Fang. If you get into a sword fight with him either of you could die. It’s such a brutal way to die, we should try and avoid that outcome.”

Cleo saw that he didn’t respond, and looked over at him.

“Orphen.....if you had to, would you kill him?”

A wry smile appeared on his face.

“By all means...yes.”

Azalie was clearly on Orphen’s mind, he then turned to leave the warehouse.

Cleo was feeling down, but she soon went back to her usual cheerful self. With sparkling eyes, she asked him a question.

“Hey, Orphen. Do you have a lover?”

“No, but I do hold someone close to me.”

Orphen was about to open up to her, he was going to tell her his story. That he was chasing a monster to the end's of the earth, to turn it back to normal. But he quickly brushed the thought aside, as he thought that Cleo would think he was crazy.

Leaving the warehouse, their conversation continued.

“Well, what is she like?”

“She's like your mother, Tishtiny.”

Upon hearing his answer, Cleo's was stricken with confusion. But Orphen explained with a smile.

“I'm only joking. Though, I'm still looking for her, and have been for a while.”

Cleo's question was a little more straightforward.

"So when you find this lady, will you marry her?"

Orphen thought for a while, then answered.

"It's not that sort of relationship, there are many different forms of love, aren't there?"

"I guess."

Cleo said, as she closed the door behind them.

"So, what kind of girl's do you like?"

"To be honest, I haven't really thought about it."

In order to avoid talking about this, Orphen quickly changed the topic of conversation.

"Hey, where did you learn to fight with a sword? Though, I must say that you should concentrate on other things."

"Well, I didn't want to go to the same school as my sister so I went to another one."

"But, in what club did you learn it in? The fencing club?"

“No, the war club.”

Orphen was surprised to hear this, and both of them continued to walk up the stairs. Orphen put his hands into his pockets and started fiddling around with the silver ring, Orphen had seen this ring before but he didn't know why it was here.....

*

“.....Can you read this text, Krylancelo?”

The girl said as she handed the ring over to him for closer inspection, he squinted at the silver ringer but eventually gave up and handed the ring back to her.

“I can't read it, can you?”

She didn't respond. In the Tower of Fang she was simply called the Demon Witch Azalie, she was one of the Tower's most promising sorcerers.

“All I know is that it's some kind of ancient magic,

it's completely different from our own.”

“Not that we'd be expected to understand that sort of thing. After all the ancients died a long time ago, I doubt anyone on this continent even speaks the language, never mind read it.”

“...Not necessarily, some of this text could be interpreted. I've at least studied some of it, though you haven't reached that far in your studies yet.”

“I know.”

“But don't worry I'll help you.”

His entire face lit up with glee.

“Really?”

Krylancelo jumped up and down, as she smiled and nodded.

“Haven't you heard the results from your most recent test? Anyway, I know you'll pass.”

Azalie threw the silver ring up into the air and then caught it, Krylancelo looked at her with admiration.

“I’ll read out what the text on the ring says, though only this time as you have to learn this yourself, okay? The text says “Against Weapon”, so that means it’s used defensively. However, it can only be used once.

“Only once?”

“Yes. This quality of this ring isn’t that high, so it mustn’t be that powerful. Though — — “

She tried to put the ring onto her finger, but it wouldn’t fit.

“It won’t fit on my finger, what about you?”

“Me neither, maybe it was made for a child?”



“You’re probably right, maybe we should try putting it on a small animal. By the way — —”

Her expression turned serious.

“After dinner, could you please come to my room. I’m planning on carrying out an experiment with ancient magic but I don’t want the elders finding out, so I’ll need you to be my assistant.”

“Sure, no problem.”

Krylancelo nodded, as she smiled back at him. In fact, this was the last time he saw the Demon Witch smile.

*

“That Black Sorcerer is really something!”

Vulcan yelled in Totokanta’s library, even though he knew the receptionist was watching him.

“Why do I have to do this.”

He muttered to himself why flipping through the pages of some ancient book, it looked like a dictionary. He came here per Orphen's instructions to investigate the Sword of Baltanders.

Vulcan's patience was at breaking point, he then looked over to his brother Dortin.

“What is it?!”

“Don't you feel angry that we're being treated this way?!”

Dortin gave him a confused look.

“Hey!”

Vulcan struck him with his bare hands. Naturally he was prohibited from bringing his sword into a public building.

“Listen here, that Black Sorcerer is making us do his dirty work while he's back at the mansion.”

“Magic is exhausting work. You can't expect him to use it all the time!”

“.....I can’t believe I’m hearing this.”

Vulcan continued to strengthen his tone, while he banged the table. “So, when did you become that sorcerer’s lap dog?”

“I was just saying — —”

“Enough! Have you forgotten how he tortured us!?”

“My brother, can’t you see what he’s done for us time and time again?”

“What did you say, asshole!”

Vulcan shouted loud and flipped over the table in frustration, he put so much strength into it that the table went flying towards the nearest bookshelf. Like an avalanche, a sea of books came tumbling downwards towards the two brothers as they screamed in terror.

“What have you done!”

The receptionist shouted at the two dwarfs. Among all this Vulcan found his salvation inside the book which was covering his face. He shouted again.

“Eureka! Eureka!”

*

“Look’s like they’re back.”

Orphen muttered to himself, him and the two dwarfs were now staying in the Everlasting residence. Hearing Vulcan and Dortin approaching, he rushed downstairs through the main hall out to the courtyard to greet them. He then took them upstairs to his room to talk.

“So, what did you find out?”

“Well, long ago the word Baltanders meant “The end of one, is the beginning of another”. This could be used to represent a coat of arms, though it kind of sounds like a magic seal.

“Hmm.....”

Orphen was brooding beside the windowsill, much to the annoyance of Vulcan. He was staring out of

the window in concentration, then suddenly he found the answer.

“That’s it! The sword must have played a role in Azalie’s transformation, that’s why he’s looking for it!”

“So in other words, the Sword of Baltanders turned her into that creature?” “It seems that way. Though something else is bothering me...”

Suddenly there was a knock on the door, from the way the person knocked Orphen knew immediately who it was.

“Come on in, Cleo.”

She opened the door and was in full view of Orphen, Cleo wasn’t wearing his usual dress anymore. She was wearing what looked like a jockey, complete with horse riding pants. Orphen thought the dress suited her more so he simply shook his head.

“You don’t have to say anything. You know what my answer will be, just change your clothes and go to

sleep.”

“Why?”

Cleo shouted angrily, as she waved both hands with white gloves in the air.

“I can help. I even got my mother’s permission!”

“.....Tishtiny gave you permission?”

Orphen asked. Cleo proudly replied, sticking out her chest.

“Yes. Mama said I could help but I mustn’t get in the way. I’ve got to protect my family too, you know.”

“

Orphen kept thinking about how he could convince her otherwise.

“Listen Cleo, we aren’t going to hunt little ducks or shoot pigs. This will be dangerous.”

“I know.”

“Maybe I haven’t made myself clear, people could die!”

“You’re a powerful sorcerer so it shouldn’t be a problem, no one will die tonight.”

“You sound so corny.”

Orphen sighed, it seems he couldn’t convince her.

“Besides, there are two of them and you can’t find both of them. So, I will assist you.”

“If I really needed help, I would hire some shady guy out of a back alley.”

“You won’t find anyone else to help you, so I’m helping you no matter what you say.”

Orphen could see that she wasn’t budging, so he considered letting her help since he did see her fight the Black Tiger.

“What kind of weapon are you planning on using?”

Cleo’s face was ecstatic, she went into the hallway and then came back with a fine edged sword.

“I’ll use this.”

Cleo said as she pulled the sword out of it’s sheath,

letting the metal glean off the gas lamps hanging on the ceiling. He could see that this sword was very suitable for her.

“Was this the weapon that you used in that club?”

Orphen asked. Cleo happily nodded.

“Listen Cleo, when you take a sword out of it’s sheath you better be prepared to use it.”

“I understand.”

Cleo hesitatingly put the sword back into it’s scabbard.

*

Orphen watched the clock in anticipation. It was just after midnight, Cleo was sleeping like a baby on the sofa, Vulcan and Dortin were also sleeping.

Although he wanted to wake them up, he didn’t bother. He was confident enough that he could take on both Childman and the Black Tiger.

(Childman...why did you have to appear?)

Under the faint light of the gas lamps, Orphen was lost in thought.

First Azalie appeared, and then Childman appeared was not long after. Inside this mansion is the Sword of Baltanders, and both Childman and Azalie want it. Orphen shook his head.

(I can't allow Childman to get his hands on it, Azalie is the one who needs it. If the Sword of Baltanders turned her into a monster, then it can turn her back."

If Childman is searching for the sword, in the same building that she attacked. If that's the case, does he also want to capture Azalie?

(This doesn't make sense. He said it was impossible to restore her to her original self. Or does he intend to destroy her with the sword?) The elders in the Tower of Fang have already removed all traces of Azalie's existence, the only thing that is left is the monster she has now become. They must remove

this stain.

(I won't let him succeed.)

Orphen whispered softly to himself.

"I will not let you kill her, if she can't be restored to her original appearance, I will protect her. If she can be saved, then I will turn her back to normal. If you get in my way, I will kill you, Childman."

Orphen quietly stood up from his chair. He glanced at Vulcan who was snoring very loudly, then he looked at Cleo who was curled up in a ball on the couch. He then turned his eyes to the window, moonlight slithered through the window and lit up the room a little. Orphen knew it was time.

He felt a sense of urgency surround him. Orphen slowly left the room and entered the corridor, which was dark due to the gas lamps being turned off. Just as he shut the door behind him, a large shockwave resounded throughout the building.

It didn't sound like Childman was attacking, this

wasn't his style. That only left Azalie, it sounded like the noise came from the courtyard. Outside the stone shone bright red, brighter than the inside of the house. It was like there was flames everywhere, a hazy cloud of smoke clouded Orphen's vision.

“Azalie!”

Orphen shouted. However, it seemed that his voice didn't carry over the flames, as Azalie didn't hear him. Azalie continued to spray flames everywhere, so much that you could only see her silhouette through the flames. Orphen tried to run towards her, however the raging flames proved to make his movement difficult.

During his struggle, Azalie started to roar as she began to dig into the ground.

(She's digging into the ground, does that mean that she know's the sword is hidden in the underground warehouse. Does she know the mansion's layout?) However, Orphen had no time to think of such things. He started whispering a mantra to build a

protective wall around him, so he could approach Azalie. At the same time, Azalie continued to spray more flames. Lumps of earth began to fly around the place, and Orphen shouted again.

“Azalie! Don’t you recognize me?!”

At the same moment, she roared again. Then, it was as if the earth itself was swallowing her. In fact, she fell into the underground warehouse.

“Damn...”

Orphen cursed to himself, as he stumbled to the ground due to the ground shaking. More than half of the courtyard was in ruins, Azalie sank into the underground warehouse and disappeared. The only thing he could hear was the crackling of the burning trees, and the occasional roar.

“Let me at them!”

Orphen could hear someone shouting, he turned around to see Cleo and the others. He could see Vulcan and Dortin huddled around her. He then

stretched out his arms and shouted.

“I hold thee, shrew’s dance!”

Then the raging flames suddenly disappeared, and the darkness returned. The only light was that from the moon, meanwhile the earth was still shaking. Orphen was about to jump into the hole, but he wanted to make sure Cleo was okay.

“Are you hurt?”

Orphen asked. Cleo shook her head.

“I’m alright. My mother and sister escaped through the back door. I’m here to help.”

“Okay.”

Orphen nodded, then he once again looked down the hole. He could vaguely see the colourful tip of Azalie’s tail, moving around in the darkness. Cleo softly whispered.

“Is this where the monster went?” “Yes.”

Orphen said, though he was against jumping into

the hole as it would be suicide. However, he couldn't afford to miss this opportunity, he may never know when he would see her again.

Vulcan drew his sword, as he hid behind his brother. Cleo did the same, although she did it a little more gracefully.

Orphen raised his hand to stop them.

“No. You mustn't fight her.”

Even Cleo didn't refute this. However, she did have a question.

“Then what are we gonna do? Will those guys even show up now?”

“Oh, they'll show up, I'm sure of it. And when they do, we'll capture them all at once.”

“How?”

“Hush!”

Orphen told the girl. Azalie's movements suddenly stopped.

“”

Orphen ignored Cleo, who was watching eagerly. He began to increase the magical potential within himself, as he imagined using a giant cage and net's to restrain the beast. He then cautiously moved towards the hole in the ground, and looked down it.

He could smell something burning, as a breeze from the hole blew upwards. Suddenly, a roar came out of the hole and shot straight into the sky.

At the same time, a huge tornado like updraft came out of the hole. This was no trivial matter, the power of the wind was so immense that it knocked everyone off their feet. When Orphen finally recovered, he could see that Cleo and the other's were pulled ten metres into the sky.

(Azalie is using magic, how despicable!)

To keep his body from falling down again, Orphen forced his legs to stay on the ground. As he cursed himself for not being better prepared.

(Now this is how you win a magic contest!)

This time Orphen had to push his abilities to the max, he put his hands together as if he was praying. He tried his best to withstand the roar.

“I summon thee, to my arm!”

At the moment his shout rang out, it was as if Orphen’s body was pulling something. It looked like he was feeding off some kind invisible force, he took all of the spirits power and released it in the form of magic. The tornado seemed to lose traction, as Cleo, Vulcan and Dortin were sent flying from the tornado. If Orphen didn’t do something quick, then all of them would slam to the ground and die from the impact.

Meanwhile, the tornado vanished.

However, Orphen used more power than he intended. His whole body was covered in sweat, he couldn’t even move his fingers. With his body out of balance, his knees started to tremble as visceral bursts of pain erupted all over his body.

Although, after a short moment, he fell to his knees. He cursed himself for not saving enough energy for another magical casting.

(Strength, I need strength. Not now of all times.)

Orphen was in luck, because the deteriorating tornado lessened the impact from the fall. They were only lightly injured, mainly in the rear end.

As Orphen desperately gasped for air Cleo ran over to him.

“What’s wrong?”

He could hear the worry in the girl’s voice. He managed to squeeze out a smile.

“It’s no big deal, I just used up too much magic.”

“Can you breath alright?”

“Yeah, just help me up, okay?”

Orphen tightly squeezed Cleo’s hand as she helped him up. He then looked around for the two brothers, while he didn’t intend to look for them, he just

wanted to know if they're alright. Orphen looked around the courtyard from where he was standing. That's when he stopped.

“ ”

Orphen could see Vulcan and Dortin sitting motionless, he could only see their backs. He thought they were dead, until he heard the groaning and whining of Vulcan.

“Yeah, they're alive alright.”

“Ouch, is that monster big enough?”

But it wasn't over yet, the monster's body was now half exposed above the ground. Azalie was indeed bigger, it was obvious that her other half was under the ground.

Orphen murmured in dismay.

“Damn, she's really gotten big!”

“How is this possible?”

Cleo inquired. Orphen replied flatly.

“When I used my magic to shut down that tornado, she must have absorbed it.”

“Absorbed!?”

Cleo muttered, but her words soon came to a halt as soon as she saw Azalie.

“Well, what do we do now?”

“Unfortunately, I can’t do anything. If I try to use anymore magic I could die from exhaustion.”

Orphen said.

Suddenly, Azalie started flapping her huge wings, she tried to fly upwards but couldn’t because she was stuck in the hole. However, it repeatedly tried to emerge from the hole and little by little it started to get loose. Vulcan and Dortin started to scream, and ran around in circles until they whacked into each other. Their swords and Dortin’s glasses fell to the ground, they were overwhelmed with fear.

“So, this is how it ends.”

Vulcan said in a tearful voice, then he quickly

switched to being angry.

“Great plan, you stupid sorcerer. If you don’t hurry up and do anything that monster will kill us!” Cleo retorted as she was helping to hold Orphen up.

“How can you say that? Can’t you see that he’s done his best!”

“Oh, excuse me princess! It’s not like it’s a life or death moment, he can at least use a sword!”

“Swords won’t work against a monster like that!”

“Shut up!”

Orphen put a stop to their arguing. He could feel his body shaking, and he was sweating all over. Even though he was weakened, his ears seemed to hear something.

“Light!”

“It’s an incantation!”

Orphen shouted as he pulled Cleo down, and together both of them lay on the ground.

Meanwhile, the entire area was filled with white light, and Azalie screamed.

Surprised, Orphen stood up. Cleo kept stuck to the ground, Orphen had no choice, he had to find out where the band of light came from. But it was too late, another bright light hit one of Azalie's wing's.

The same incantation sounded again.

“Light!”

(It came from the rooftop.)

Orphen had found the source, he looked at the rooftop to only see a figure fire another barrage at Azalie.

There were two men on the rooftop, a tall slender figure and another one slightly shorter than him. Orphen shouted.

“Childman!”

However, he ignored him and continued to raise his hand.

“Light!”

Arrows of light hit Azalie’s body, resulting in pieces of flesh being torn off. Landing on the ground, they gave off a sizzling sound.

Orphen raised his hands into the air.

“Stop!”

Along with his shouting, Orphen summoned what little strength he had left, and fired his own volley of light straight at the two men. After the smoke cleared, he looked for the two figures, who seemed to have disappeared.

(Did they run away, or are they dead?)

Orphen listened in dismay as he could hear something land behind him. He turned around to see the two men who were on the roof, in front of him.

“Who’s there?”

Cleo groaned and got up from the ground. Her hands ready to pull out her sword from her sheath.

(Don't do it, if you do that they'll kill you!)

Inadvertently, he found himself taking cover behind the injured Azalie.

The two black sorcerer's who jumped from the rooftop were ready for anything.

One of them being Childman, who was emotionless as ever. With his cold face and piercing eyes, his stare was something to be reckoned with.

The other black sorcerer was a red-haired man, who awkwardly looked at Orphen.

"Hartia."

Orphen muttered. The young man apologetically spoke to him.

"Krylancelo, I'm sorry it had to be this way."

Hartia then moved to his teacher's side.

"I'm sorry too, Shrimp man."

".....How did you know?" "Isn't it obvious? Out of everyone on this continent, nobody else would dress

like an idiot.”

Hartia was surprised. A faint smile then emerged on Orphen’s face.

Cleo was shocked to find out that the Black Tiger was Orphen’s friend.

However, Orphen’s smile soon faded as she intensely stared at Childman.

“Get out of here, Krylancelo.”

“Bite me!”

“Krylancelo!”

This time Hartia shouted.

“Listen up, Krylancelo. This fall’s under the jurisdiction of the Alliance of Sorcerers, Not the Tower of Fang!”

“Are you here to kill Azalie?!”

Childman said with a monotone voice.

“.....Yes.”

“Then, you’ll have to go through me.”

Orphen returned to Cleo’s side.

“I know you don’t have much magical energy left.”

“I’ve got a trick up my sleeve.”

Orphen said as he secretly motioned for Vulcan to come closer. Vulcan thought he was going to help him out, but Orphen had other plans for him.

“Fly!”

Orphen used magic. Vulcan was sent through the air at an incredible speed. Naturally, Childman and Hartia didn’t anticipate such an attack, so they were caught off guard.

Orphen was about to continue his attack but Cleo grabbed him by the wrist. It was then that he finally noticed what was happening, Azalie was staring straight at them, and preparing to attack.

She started to cast an incantation.

Cleo wrestled him to the ground, and pulled him out

of the way of the incantation.



“Damn it.”

Orphen said, as he grabbed Cleo and wrapped his arms around her while he used what little magic he had left.

“Amber shield from my fingertips!”

At the same time, Azalie’s roar was deafening. Orphen just closed his eyes, hoping that they would survive this ordeal.

When Orphen opened his eyes, the sky was very bright. In fact, it was already noon. From the window a ray of dazzling sunlight flew in, he was lying in a bed surround by Tishtiny and the others. Vulcan was the only one who was slightly charred, as he didn’t have any magic to shield him from Azalie’s attack.

He knew that Vulcan was about to open his mouth, and what he was about to say. He just didn’t’ bother listening, Tishtiny on the other side of the bed watched in disgust.

“You bastard! Not only did I get toasted out there, I find out that you are taking it easy. I ought to grind you into dust with a toothbrush and use you as toothpaste!”

“Stop this at once, can’t you see that Mr. Orphen is exhausted!?”

“But — —”

Cleo couldn’t stand him, so she grabbed him by the cloak and dragged him out of the room. Now, only Tishtiny and Orphen were left in the room. Orphen didn’t waste any time and got right to business.

“.....What happened?”

“After we put you to bed, people from the Alliance of Sorcerers came and started to search the underground warehouse.”

“.....And Childman?”

“He should be in the warehouse with the others.”

Orphen put his right hand over his eyes, and sighed deeply.

(I can't believe it, I've failed her.)

He didn't cry, but Tishtiny could see that he was crying inside. After that, both of them had a moment of silence.

Chapter 5: Night of “Hunting”

“Damn it, we’ve searched the entire warehouse and can’t find it. That monster must have taken it.”

Childman was as cold as ever.

“For five years, me and my men have been after that monster. You can understand why we must kill it.”

“So you intend to erase her from existence?”

Orphen mumbled, but Childman’s expression never changed — — his cheek didn’t even twitch. He just coldly replied.

“She died five years ago. We are only hunting a flying monster.”

“Azalie is that flying monster!”

Orphen sat stiff in a leather chair, and cursed Childman’s name inside himself. He was sitting in a

dim lit room, a room within the Alliance of Sorcerer's Totokanta branch. Apart from the chair Orphen was sitting in, there was a small table with a kettle and glasses. It was a very small room, you couldn't even call it a room, it was more like a prison cell. Orphen then stood up and looked directly at Childman and Hartia.

“Do you really think that, Krylancelo?”

Hartia asked, as his face was filled with worry. He then unfolded his arms and continued to talk.

“Can't you see that it's not her anymore? That monster has no memory of us, only the beasts natural instincts remain.”

“Is this true?”

Orphen asked, though his question was directed at Childman.

“Yes. But the Sword of Baltanders could return the monster to her former self, that's why it came to the Everlasting residence.”

“But how you know it was there?”

“Because I hid it there.”

Orphen was surprised, he never expected this. Childman continued, as he opened his dry lips.

“If you must know, the previous master of the Everlasting household hired me as a personal assassin.”

Childman’s expression didn’t change in the slightest, he continued softly.

“It was too dangerous to keep the sword in the Tower of Fang, so it was agreed that it would be stored in the underground warehouse.”

Orphen peered back at Childman from across the room, his face was still motionless.

“She pledged allegiance to our organisation and tried to use ancient magic. Curiosity simply killed the cat.”

“She is not dead!”

“You’re delusional.”

Childman’s amber eyes glowed up in the darkness, like a lizard watching its prey. Orphen wanted to turn away, but he couldn’t. It was like he was frozen in place, as if he was suffering from some strange kind of illness. But it was no illness, it was Childman. (Is there a secret to his strength?)

Orphen asked himself.

(He is always he so calm, as if he gleans power from his own sheer devotion. In any case, I can’t match is strength.

Even when Orphen was in the Tower of Fang, he couldn’t beat Childman. Suffice to say, he was inferior, even now. If Azalie was considered the first genius since the Tower was established, then Childman will be the last genius. Though, he was still considered the strongest black sorcerer in the Tower of Fang and across the land. Taking that into consideration, it’s easy to see why people are afraid of him.

Childman suddenly moved, and started walking towards Orphen.

“I’ve been hunting that monster for a very long time.....however, our opponent has the ability to use powerful magic. It has also proved to be very resilient, before there were more of us, now the party is down to me. She killed everyone else.” “As long as her sanity remains, I know she won’t kill me.”

Hartia then spoke next. However, Orphen didn’t pay attention to him.

“But Childman, even with your magic skills can you beat her?”

Childman’s footsteps came to a sudden halt.

“Maybe, but she has a hidden trump card.”

“.....White magic.”

Orphen said flatly. Hartia’s face had lost some of its colour.

Childman continued, as if he was giving a lecture.

“White magic has the power to manipulate time and energy. Although it sounds rather simple, it’s actually a very powerful form of magic, when used right.”

He gently waved his hand.

“Even the usage of white magic in wartime has been known to turn the tide of the war.”

Childman put his hand to his head, and started stroking his hair.

“What’s wrong Childman, talking isn’t usually your style.”

“If you would have let me finish, I was going to say that white magic isn’t everything. That’s because, the most powerful fighting force is a well disciplined black sorcerer.”

“.....Are you still planning on killing her?”

Orphen said with clenched teeth. However, the teacher was as cold as ever.

“Of course. However, I could do with your

assistance.”

“Screw you!”

“Krylancelo, this is — —”

Hartia made every effort to get Orphen’s attention. However, the red headed man bit his lip.

“This is your atonement for leaving the Tower of Fang. Besides, if we work together we can find her faster.”

“I want to find her alive, I don’t want to kill her.”

“Krylancelo, I want you to participate in our plan. We’ll find her— — no, the monster and get back the sword. If you do, you could rise to a high position within the tower. You could perhaps become an assistant to one of the teachers.”

Orphen was filled with a sense of disgust, so much that he almost vomited.

“I’ve had enough of you and that place. You’ll have to rely on your own means to succeed, I’ll have nothing to do with you.”

“Can’t you see that this is only causing harm to the Tower of Fang and it’s reputation? If we fail in our quest, the authority of the Tower will plummet! Please come back, you can gain what you have lost. You can still become one of the candidate’s again, don’t throw your past away.”

Hartia swallowed and took a deep breath.

“Do you want to do odd jobs for the rest of your life?”

“My hope is that — —”

Orphen was cut mid sentence by Childman, whose cough stopped the two men bickering. Hartia turned to look at him, but he said nothing. He just watched them for a moment, then he began to talk.

“You two are arguing over pointless things.

Krylancelo, listen to me. Tonight, we are organising our forces on a crusade against the monster. Several black sorcerers from the Tower of Fang will also be participating.

“.....Do you know her location?”

“When you were in this branch the other day, I snuck into the Everlasting residence. I found the sword in the warehouse, and I put a tracking spell on it. That way, I can track where it goes.”

“.....You always were one step ahead of me.”

“Tonight we will kill that flying monster. You can come with us, but if you do you will follow my orders. So, are you coming or not?”

“.....” Orphen wanted to say something, but Childman’s eyes were glaring at him ever so strongly. His face, as always, was like a mask with cold expressions. No, this was not a mask, but his true face. Orphen thought this was kinda ironic.

“.....When do we leave?”

Orphen asked. Childman didn’t smile or nod, but his eyes did show some interest. He answered quietly.

“The troops will be assembled in the evening. We will provide you with weapons and food, if need be. Make sure you are prepared before we leave.”

*

“Tonight? Then I’ve got to get ready!”

Then she started to nag him.

“It’ll take at least an hour for me to do my hair. And not sleeping for days hasn’t done my skin any favours. “

Orphen couldn’t stand it. He just sighed.

“You’ll stay in the house.”

Cleo was taken aback.

“Oh, come on.”

Vulcan was speechless, he just started shaking his finger at the girl.

“Haven’t you realized, he’s the lone wolf type of guy.”

“Am I? I’ll need you to do something while I’m on the hunt.”

“What?!”

Vulcan was motionless, with his finger still in the air.

“B-But, it’ll be dangerous.”

Cleo ran over, and hit Orphen in the head with a broom.

“Last time I check weren’t those guys who came to the mansion you’re enemies? This so-called hunt could be a ruse to attack you when you’re not looking.”

“They would never do something like that, besides they want my help. The least I could do is indulge them, and maybe disrupt their plans.”

Orphen muttered to himself.

“All’s well that ends’ well.”

He then spread out his hands.

“I will join the troops under the command of Childman. Frankly, Azalie has no chance of winning

this fight. Tonight she will be killed by them, but
— —”

“I will go ahead and protect Azalie from Childman and his men. Whether I’m successful or not, I probably won’t be coming back here. I’m sorry, I want to help repair your estate. But I don’t have anytime to spare.”

Later that day, Orphen and Childman’s men walked through a valley in darkness. The sun went down a while ago, and it’s now night time.

“Isn’t it dangerous to be out here at night?”

Orphen asked. But Childman replied coldly.

“Is there something wrong?”

“No, it’s just that, shouldn’t we attack during the day? She obviously has the advantage in the night.”

Orphen said sarcastically, but Childman wasn’t having any of his antics.

“We press onward.”

Orphen had nothing else to do, he just stared at the troops advancing through the valley. They were a few kilometres away from Totokanta, in the foothills to the west. From looking at the map, he could see that there were a couple of villages in the vicinity. However, they weren't going near them because they had to keep the operation a secret. Childman ensured all the troops followed this order.

At the head of the unit was Childman, and behind him was Orphen. Simply because he wanted to keep a close eye on him, and observe his talents. Behind Orphen was six black sorcerers who all wore similar clothing, the black cloaks made them look like some sort of religious followers. Orphen carried a sword around his waist. Among them men he could see Hartia, who was clearly avoiding eye contact with him. He was carrying an infantry rifle.

And in addition to these men, there was a lonesome old man around sixty years old. He looked to be in rather good shape, though he was much slower than the rest of the men, who were much younger. The

old man had grey hair and no beard, even at his age there weren't much wrinkles. He didn't even carry any weapons, he only had the symbol of the Tower of Fang. Though he did have a dice necklace, which was proof of his ability to use white magic.

There was so much powerful sorcerers in this operation that they even had to get approval from the King. Otherwise they're activity would be illegal, especially since they have a white sorcerer. Taking everyone is consideration, they're power could rival that of even the Thirteen Apostles.

Orphen quietly asked Childman a question.

“.....Do you really think you can stop Azalie with white magic?”

“Possibly.”

Childman answered, as cruel as ever.

“That isn't a definite answer, what's the real plan?”

“Why do you think I brought so many people. It's like chess, the pawns sacrifice themselves for the

King. It doesn't matter how many people die in the initial attack, what matters is that someone can get close enough to kill the monster."

"I think that's fairly obvious."

Orphen said while thinking to himself.

(Who knows)

He then asked another question.

"So, who's leading the charge against Azalie?"

"You are. The young are the most tenacious, and you have great combat skills. Though your character could do with some improvement—"

It was rare for Childman to make a joke. "Besides, if you die. That means less paperwork for me."

*

"Oh, poor me. Why do I have to suffer like this? That bastard should get his own hands dirty for once!"

Vulcan said as he was walking through tall grass and weeds. Meanwhile, his brother Dortin was cutting the tall grass and weeds in front of him.

“What right do you have to complain?”

Behind Dortin was Vulcan, who was holding a lamp to light the way, and cutting the occasional weed with his own machete.

“I have every right!

Behind Vulcan was Cleo, she was wearing lightweight riding clothes and holding a sword.

“I heard that you got some information so you could help Orphen. Will those sorcerers really go there?”

“Don’t question my intelligence gathering skills.”

Vulcan didn’t look back.

“As a matter of fact, a friend of mine told me where those Alliance of Sorcerer’s fellows were going.”

“Can you actually trust those so-called friends of yours?”

Cleo asked. However, a look of impotence went over Vulcan's face. He didn't have the heart to face the girl with her sword out.

"Watch where you're pointing that sword."

"How dare you, a knight's sword is held with justice."

Cleo majestically held up her sword into the air. Seeing this, Vulcan started to move faster. But there was no escape, so Vulcan raised his own weapon.

"You say knight? Since when did the Everlasting family become nobles? If you don't stop this nonsense, I'll kill you with a pencil!" "Do you seek death?"

Cleo roared.

Dortin notice that both of them had stopped, he knew that he had to pick a side. But he didn't know who to side with, he didn't want to see them fight but he also didn't want to upset anyone. If he choose Cleo, he would have to endure weeks of torment

from his brother. If he choose his brother, he really didn't know what would happen. Chopped into pieces, maybe? He didn't want to think about it, so he made a decision.

“You guys!”

Dortin ran in between both of them.

“Cam down! Put your weapons away! This is insane!”

He really didn't want to play peacemaker, but he really didn't expect Vulcan and Cleo to still be at each other's throats.

“Brother, come to your senses!”

However, he couldn't stop them. Both of them raised each other's swords and mercilessly hit each other in the forehead. So much, that blood ran down their faces.

“You actually hit me!”

“How dare you!”

Vulcan roared, but he then turned back around and started hacking at the tall grass. Shortly after, Cleo followed behind him, as did Dortin.

The three continued onward for a while, until Cleo started to complain.

“When will it end? My feet are starting to hurt.”

“Well, according to the map it shouldn’t be much longer.”

“How much longer?”

“About two hours.”

“You’ve got to be joking.”

“Don’t complain, you were the one who insisted on tagging along.”

An obvious smirk erupted on Vulcan’s face.

“Well, it is only two hours.”

Cleo muttered wearily. Though something else was on her mind, she was hearing something rustling in the bushes.

“”

She began to wipe the sweat from her forehead.

“Vulcan, just where did you get your intelligence from?”

“Well, I...”

Vulcan wore a pale face.

“I got it from the Bagup Hotel, I meet some interesting people there.”

“So you trust some random people?”

Cleo could see Vulcan getting riled up.

“Listen.....why the hell are you bringing that up now of all times?”

Just as he finished his sentence, a loud roar resounded throughout the sky.

Five meters away from them rose the giant monster, it roared again. The gaslamp was dropped, leaving them in darkness. They could only hope that it didn't notice them.

*

Two hours later, the troops took a rest, where they left Orphen alone.

This was his golden opportunity, he could easily sneak away and get ahead of Childman and the troops. Though something was bugging him, they have been moving in a straight line ever since they moved into the valley. That and they've been moving at a faster pace, signaling that he's planning on starting the operation soon than planned.

Orphen needed to get to the forest as quick as possible, then he also thought about how long it would take him to find Azalie. He advanced deeper into the forest, but found it difficult to find her. That's because she choose to hide deep inside the forest.

(Can I do this? Am I one step ahead of him?)

Orphen asked himself, as he trotted around in the forest.

(Have I ever won against him?)

Orphen was worried that he might mess things up, that he might fail. A surging tide of depression went over him, but he quickly shook his head to rid himself of such thoughts.

(If I don't get my head in the game, then Azalie will die)

Orphen thought to himself as he trampled over cut weed, that he cut to clear him a path. For the next hour he advanced, but then he suddenly stopped. His whole body was covered in sweat, the coolness of the night wind gave him a refreshing feeling. He needed it since his clothes were practically stuck to him, he then put the sword back into his sheath. Ever since last night, he couldn't shake the feeling that something bad would happen.

Suddenly, he saw something in the distance. Orphen closed his eyes, as sweat oozed out of every pore. He

wiped his forehead with the palm of his head, to rid himself of the sweat. Just as heavy rain started to rain from the sky, his ears twitched in reaction.

Orphen sighed, perhaps it was an illusion. He opened his eyes and looked up, it was just a regular forest. But there was something wrong with this forest, there was no sound. He looked around the place into the darkness of the forest, and started grinning.

He told himself that yelling in a place like this was simply foolish. Not to mention, Childman will eventually catch up to him. However, he knew this was the right course of action.

(I always trusted your instincts)

“Azalie!”

Her name slowly resounded throughout the forest, where it eventually dissipated. It was as if peace was finally restored to the forest. Then a breeze then blew over the forest, rustling the leaves and branches of the forest.

Orphen shouted again!

“Azal — —” A loud roar resounded through the forest. It was deafening, so much that gusts of air blew through the forest. Sending branches and leaves alike flying, Orphen even had to use his arm to protect himself.

Then, the roar happened again.

(That’s Azalie’s roar!)

Instantly, Orphen happily rushed out ahead — — he thought Azalie’s roar was a reaction to his yelling. If that was the case, then she still retained some of her sanity.

(No — — wait)

Orphen ran many ideas through his head, as to why Azalie was roaring.

(Could she have known that human’s were approaching, is that why she roared? If the beast continues to do this, she could escape.) If that’s the case, then there was no chance for him to catch up to

her. That goes for Childman too.

“I won’t give up!”

Adrenaline pumped through Orphen’s system, as he started to run through the forest at a miraculous speed. He could hear Azalie roaring as he neared her position, leaping from place to place he heard— — Azalie roar again, but this one was different, it shook the forest to its very core. As compressed air was sent flying in all directions, causing multiple explosions. This made Orphen consider moving more slowly, however the earth itself began to shake. And all the trees and weeds within a ten metre radius of Azalie began to sink beneath the earth, as Orphen looked in dismay. But it wasn’t the now desolated area he should be concerned about, but the huge shadow in the center.

(Azalie.....)

Orphen gazed at the huge beast as he sat a mere ten metres away, staying as quiet as possible. Although large, the beast may be low of energy after the battle

last night. He could tell this as Azalie was now three metres in length. He could see something shining — — it was the sword of baltanders.

Orphen stared at the beast, while it laid there motionless.

(Why did it create an open space in the forest?)

Orphen carefully questioned himself.

(Naturally, she probably knew people were hunting her. But it didn't make any sense for her to destroy part of the forest. Unless — —) Orphen started thinking, then Azalie roared, as to signal her movement.

(Unless she made this open area to fight!)

Azalie started purring, just as Orphen tried to retreat.

But at that very moment, numerous balls of light were sent flying right at Orphen. Catapulting him into the air momentarily, until he regained his footing. He then shouted at Azalie.

“Azalie! Don’t you recognize me?”

She answered his call with another attack. But luckily he was able to roll out of the way, he then shouted again.

“Have you really lost your memory of me, Azalie?”

The beast didn’t seem to care, it just roared again.

Numerous blades of light and compressed air were sent flying over the deafening roar.

Orphen put out his arms, and shouted.

“Amber shield from my fingertips!”

The shield made from compressed air protected him. However, parts of Azalie’s attack made it through, leaving some scratches on Orphen’s face.

(She’s going to kill me.)

Orphen was stunned at the immense power that the beast had, he knew that he couldn’t escape. He will probably be her first kill of the night.

(Factoring in our difference in power, I’d say I have

no chance in winning.)

In the middle of the battle, Orphen hesitated. Azalie put her head into the air and started summoning a giant ball of light, which expanded rapidly. Orphen's body was suddenly wrought with pain, as a strong electrostatic discharge made his hairs stand up. Azalie must be summoning a massive attack, no matter what kind of defense Orphen has, it will hit him directly.

(I'm gonna be killed— —)

Orphen closed his eyes in despair— —

Though even with his eyelids closed, he could still see some of the light.

Orphen opened his eyes, and Azalie's attack wasn't released.

Bam!

From behind of him a wave of light and heat struck Azalie in the face, then the ball of light exploded. A blast of wind was sent in every direction, and even

grazed Orphen's skin. In the center there were only flames, he couldn't even see her shadow.

(Is Azalie dead?)

Not knowing what had just happened, Orphen turned around to the forest behind him. He saw Hartia standing with the group of black sorcerers and the old man.

“Childman? He's here?!”



Orphen shouted. Childman could still hear his cries over the explosion, as he calmly walked towards him with no expression. Hartia and the other's followed after him, they could all see the fear on Orphen's face. All the other sorcerers had a wide variety of expressions, but none of them were moved by what they had done. The old man who used white magic came towards Orphen, and passed him by. Behind him, there was only a pillar of fire surrounding the monster. Orphen then looked over at Childman.

"I wanted to surprise you."

Orphen mumbled, while Childman replied coldly.

"Oh, really? I thought I made myself clear."

He shrugged.

"I said you were leading the charge."

"You bastard!"

Orphen shouted at Childman. Darkness suddenly fell all around them, then the pillar of fire

dissipated.

Azalie roared again. At the same time, Childman moved behind the white sorcerer, who was now surrounded by blue and white flames.

“.....!”

He didn't even have time to scream, the flames were so hot that it killed him instantly. He was incinerated.

“Spread out!”

Childman quickly gave orders to his subordinates, the black sorcerers rushed in all directions like a pack of dogs. Only Childman remained in the center, meanwhile Orphen watched him.

“She's so stubborn.”

Childman and the other's began to talk softly, then the black sorcerers went on the attack.

“Fire!”

They all shouted their own spells, Fire, Wind, Light

and so on. A total of six attacks came from all directions. However, Azalie roared resounded throughout the night sky, and all the attacks stop half way.

Then Azalie roared again, and a bolt of lightning hit one of the black sorcerers, blowing up his body. It seemed he didn't have enough time to release his defensive magic. Staring at what was left of the young man's body, Orphen wondered what he should do. He knew that even though Azalie was fighting, she couldn't hold it up for long. So, Orphen had to do something to help her, but he just didn't know what to do.

(I understand. But, can I do it?)

Orphen glanced over at Childman. Right now, the teacher's attention was concentrated on the men who were fighting Azalie. He also noticed that Childman was holding back, and so he made up his mind. Orphen was determined, and he ran in the direction of Azalie.

(I need to take that sword away from her and escape. That way, Childman will come after me and Azalie will retreat just like last time.) He looked at the sword lying at her feet, Orphen opened his mouth and began chanting a mantra. And with one deep breath, he increased his body's strength. With the strength of a beast, he slid past Azalie and grabbed the sword. Then he made a break for the forest, but behind Orphen — —.

“Hartia! Krylancelo has taken the sword! Go after him!”

In the midst of the battle, Orphen could hear Childman give Hartia an order.

Boom, boom...

He could constantly hear explosions going off behind him. From the sound of things — — he could tell that Azalie wasn't dead. He tightened his grip of the huge sword of Baltanders, and stopped in his tracks. Looking into the forest, he couldn't see anyone approaching.

(Childman probably sent one or two guys with Hartia after me. However, this will only give Azalie the advantage.)

Orphen began to run again, he wanted to avoid fighting Hartia at all costs.

But— —

“Fire!”

Hartia shouted. The tree Orphen just ran by caught fire, and began to burn. Orphen knew he had to turn around and face him, or risk getting hit in the back. Orphen stood there waiting for him, and for the first few seconds he couldn't see him. The suddenly, he came out of the heavy forest and threw his rifle to the ground. He pulled his sword out of it's sheath and charged forward.

“That monster killed Komikuron!^[1] Do you remember him? He was from our class, Childman's class!”

Hartia shouted. He was killed when Azalie hit him

with her lighting, Orphen mustn't've noticed that it was him.

".....That was Komikuron?"

Orphen muttered. Then Hartia angrily spoke.

"Everyone knew how dangerous this operation would be, but you continue to disappoint us!"

"Disappoint?"

"You betrayed us!"

Hartia fiercely said, as he pointed at Orphen.

"If you are so determined to save her, then end her suffering. Can't you see she doesn't have the will to fight?"

"You want me to kill Azalie."

Orphen's smile was full of irony. He then stuck the Sword of Baltanders into the ground, standing upright.

Hartia's look changed to that of disgust.

"She no longer has a heart, she is simply a beast."

“That’s not true, the sword can change her back to her old self. And I’ll be the one to do it!”

“Did you forget? She killed Komikuron!”

“Yes, because you attacked her first. It’s called self-defence.”

“Even so, didn’t she attack you first? That’s not what I would call self-defence!”

“It seems our opinion runs along two parallel lines.”

Orphen deliberately imitated the tone of Childman. This lit a fire in Hartia’s eyes.

“Then it’s war from here on out!”

“This won’t end well for you. Remember what happened last time, Black Tiger?”

Orphen quickly began to chant.

“Sword of Light, whom I do release!”

Boom!

A wave of light and heat exploded between the two

men, dirt and dust was kicked up all around them. Orphen took advantage of this and jumped backwards, to distance himself from Hartia.

Meanwhile, Hartia started chanting.

“Darkness!”

At that very moment, darkness came upon them from every direction — — so much that you couldn’t even see the stars. Even with his strong night-time vision, he couldn’t see through this darkness.

Orphen continued to jump backwards, he didn’t think Hartia would have casted this in such a big area. But no matter how much he moved backwards, he couldn’t escape the darkness. So, Orphen gave up retreating, stuck out his hand and shouted.

“I withdraw thee — —”

However, someone grabbed Orphen’s arm.

“.....!”

Orphen was flung through the air and hit the sword, but it didn’t seem to be Hartia who did it.

Orphen threw away the sword, put both of his hands together at this chest and shouted.

“I erase thee, demon’s footprints”

He emitted enough power to bring down the magical environment, it collapsed like a mirror being broken.

Orphen looked around, where he saw Hartia standing ten metres away. But then that’s when he saw her, even Hartia noticed his expression of disbelief.

“Cleo!”

“Orphen!!!”

She spoke with a tearful voice and came charging through the bushes behind Hartia, she kicked the red-haired man onto the ground. Then she stood on top of him — — no doubt about it, that’s Cleo.

“Help!”

Then Vulcan and Dortin came jumping out for the bushes too, jumping on the poor Hartia as they came

running towards Orphen.

“Monster! There’s a monster! This is your line of work, you black sorcerer bastard!”

“What my brother means to say, is help.”

“You guys, what’s going on?”

Orphen said as he hugged the girl, the moved onto the hard questions.

“Well, I wanted to help find the monster and — —”

“She hit it with a rock! You’ve got to help us.”

“I didn’t do it on purpose you dimwit!”

“Calm down guys. You mean Azalie, don’t you?”

Orphen looked in the direction he had just came from. He saw Hartia attempting to lift himself up, he had an extremely angry face.

“You bastards!”

But just as he shouted, a huge figure came flying out of the bushes.

Hartia screamed as if he was gonna die, as it looked like the beast was going to trample him. Orphen quickly took a stance, and started changing.

“Sword of Light, whom I do release!”

A bright light lit up the entire forest.

A wave of light and heat struck the shadowy figure, blowing it up. After the dust had settled, Orphen could see that the explosion sent Hartia flying a couple of metres from where he last was. He ignored Hartia writhing in pain, and concentrated on the half blown up corpse of the monster. He could see that it was squirming as it's organs were now exposed, it was smaller than he thought. It looked nothing like Azalie, for one it looked like a mixture between a cow and a bear. It also had a large bladder near it's throat.

“Looks like your monster was just a wild animal.”

“Is it dead?”

Cleo said, as she tightly hugged Orphen's waist.

Orphen then put his hand on her blonde hair and spoke.

“For the most part yes. Though, I didn’t expect to see this kind of beast around these parts.”

“Ha ha ha!” Orphen could hear laughter behind him. He turned around to see Vulcan standing on the head of the now comatose Hartia, and Dortin standing beside him. Vulcan proudly raised his sword into the air and shouted.

“Look, I gave the final blow to this sorcerer I, the Masmaturian Bulldog am victorious.”

“.....He’s not dead.”

“Then I’ll pull his hair out until he dies!”

“

Vulcan started to spout more nonsense, while trampling over unconscious Hartia’s body. The Orphen spoke softly.

“.....Get off him will you? I’ve got more pressing matters.”

“Thanks for saving us.”

Cleo pouted as she let go of Orphen’s waist. Orphen nodded in agreement. He then looked at Hartia’s unconscious body, it seemed he was in a coma. Orphen then softly whispered as he knelt down to his body.

“I won’t let you or the Tower of Fang kill Azalie.”

“

Hartia couldn’t answer.

“Did you say something, Orphen?”

Cleo asked. Orphen replied rather coldly.

“It’s nothing.”

He then picked up the Sword of Baltanders off the ground and handed it to Cleo.

“Keep the sword and Hartia safe. I still have a job to do.”

Orphen finished talking. He heard an explosion come from the direction of Azalie, then Cleo stood in

front of him.

“Please wait a moment!” Cleo said sincerely, she then threw the sword at Vulcan and Dortin. Both of them caught it and went tumbling backwards.

“Those two can guard the sword. Don’t cast me aside.....I can come in handy.”

“Listen here — —”

After listening to her, Orphen suddenly felt like he had too much baggage. He needed to say something that could change her mind.

“Fine, you can come with me.”

Orphen finished his sentence, Cleo was ecstatic and started cheering. Then moved for a little bit until — —.

“Hey, wait a minute.”

“Why?”

“I’ve come all the way here and I’ve got blisters on the bottom of my feet. If I continue like this my feet

will start to bleed, could you possibly carry me?”

Orphen ignored her and ran on ahead. The cheering behind him instantly turned into cursing.

He made it back to the battlefield and saw that it was over. It was obvious that Azalie was winning, scattered across the area were a couple of corpses. He saw the burned old white sorcerer, and Komikuron, there were two other headless bodies. Orphen took another look around and saw an unidentifiable black sorcerer that was also burned. Everyone seemed to be killed by black magic.

(.....Why didn't she use white magic?)

This was bugging Orphen, from the first time she appeared at the Everlasting household she didn't use white magic. He wondered if she could even use white magic at all.

Azalie had an extraordinary fighting ability. After all she was known as the demon witch, one of the best black sorcerers. However, he only counted five corpses. That just leaves Childman.

He was staring directly at Orphen, he had just returned from checking on Hartia. He turned his attention to Azalie, and shouted.

“Light!”

An amazing volley of light emanated from Childman and struck Azalie, causing an explosion. It was so hot that it scorched the ground nearby, but it seemed Azalie didn't suffer serious injuries. She must have casted a magical barrier.

(With such terrible strength, I don't think Childman can win.)

Azalie then roared, and started to prepare an attack. Then teacher and student both took a stance, and both shouted in unison.

“I spin thee, armour of light!”

Both of them summoned a barrier around them, but Childman's barrier was less than perfect. Parts of his clothes started to catch fire, he could be in real danger. Azalie loomed over him and prepared her

next attack. Orphen smirked and thought it ironic.

“Do you need my help?”

“Komikuron may not be dead?”

“I can’t help you. I want to save Azalie and you want to kill her.”

Then Orphen frowned.

“Azalie’s strong isn’t she? She has the kind of power that no mere human can match.”

“Of course she does.”

Childman coldly answered, as he started another mantra.

“Light!”

“Stop it!”

Orphen shouted.

Azalie and Childman both unleashed an attack on each other. Both of their barrier withstood their attacks, but after the bright light disappeared, Childman was nowhere to be seen.

Then all Orphen could hear was Childman laughing.

“Are you really going to defend that monster while I cast magic until dawn?”

“I want you to understand one thing.”

Orphen looked at Azalie, after a brief pause, he began to talk.

“There must be a way to save her, we need to figure out how we can use the Sword of Baltanders.”

“

Childman stared at Orphen with uncertain eyes, this lasted a while. But in the end, Childman begun to laugh. For a change, his face was full of emotion.

“You’ve grown up to become a good man. Someday I will need a successor, that person should be you.”

“Childman, cut the bullshit— —”

Orphen was cut off mid-sentence. Dazed and confused, he looked down to see a dagger plunged deep into his gut. He could smell and taste blood in

his mouth, the pain was unbearable. It was hard for him to resist the temptation to rest his eyes.

“Child...man...why— —”

He could barely utter a sentence, before Childman calmly replied.

“Don’t worry, I’ll heal you after I’m finished.”

“You.....bastard.”

Orphen stretched out his hand only to touch nothing. Childman gently turned to face Azalie, she was roaring. But he was one step ahead of her, for her was already chanting.



“Demon!”

Tap Tap Tap

It sounded like the devil’s footsteps, a tremendous force weighed down upon the earth. So much that the area surrounding Azalie began to sink into the earth, she could feel the pressure squeezing her tightly.

Azalie started to groan loudly, as if she was going to cast magic. However, she soon stopped groaning, as the newly formed atmosphere began to surround her. It was like a big black mist that covered the area, and before long she was completely covered in it. Suddenly, there was a bright flash as intense magical explosions went off. Azalie was being rung like wet towel, the Childman moved over to Orphen and began to heal his wounds. But Orphen payed no attention to that, he was only concerned for Azalie. The temperature of the monsters body rose very fast, and the monster suddenly fell to the ground. Ignoring the intense heat, Orphen touched her head.

“Azalie!”

He shouted her name but didn’t get a response, her head was full of burn marks. However, she was faintly breathing, and her half melted eyelids slowly began to open.

“Azalie. It’s me, Orphen — —it’s me, Krylancelo! Azalie!”

“Kry...lan...celo!”

Azalie’s eyes suddenly snapped open — —her eyeball was almost human, but it was burning bright red. Her voice was trembling so it was hard to hear what she was saying. However, this wasn’t Azalie’s voice. It was a man’s voice.

“Krylancelo! I’ve been looking for you.”

“.....?”

Orphen stared blankly at her, or rather him, as it continued talking.

“I can’t see anything anymore, I can only hear. I want to understand things, but I cannot see.”

“.....What’s going on?”

Orphen asked, but the monster didn’t give a satisfactory answer. Like a dying person, it stuck out its hand.

“...I...want...to...help...her...”

“

“I’ve...been...looking...for...you...I’m...sure...you...can...help...her...”

The monster couldn’t speak anymore, it’s eye’s twitched a little then stopped. It seems the monsters life had finally ebbed away.

Orphen raised his head. He saw Childman standing in front of him with a deadpan— —no, he only saw a satisfied look burning in Childman’s eyes. As he looked down upon the monster. In the silence of the night forest, shouting suddenly rang out.

“Damn! You bastard! You’re like an old man carrying sacks of flour, I ought to whip you into shape.”

“Shut up!”

“If I were two feet taller I could beat you with one arm.”

Orphen looked and saw Hartia holding Vulcan, he then saw Dortin and Cleo following him. Hartia didn't seem to be in pain, he must have strengthened himself with magic. In addition to the three hostages, he was also carrying the Sword of Baltanders.

“Orphen, I'm taking the sword back to the Tower.”
Hartia smirked.

“My acting wasn't bad, right?”

Hartia said, as he was held Cleo and the other's hostage.

However, Orphen payed no attention to his words. He didn't even care, about Hartia or the Sword of Baltanders. Because Orphen was beginning to understand his stupid tricks.

Chapter 6: Demon Witch

Orphen is waiting.

North of Totokanta lies Stairway Road^[2], in the summer this road was like a slander jewel. Summer has just started. Travelers usually complement its dark green colours, though the fashion for this summer is light green. This season, the wind is blowing from the east, almost without interruption. The strong wind today was very unpleasant. Orphen was sitting in what looked like a river bank, he stared down the other side of the road— —towards the city of Totokanta.

Orphen had been waiting for a while. However, his face did not reveal his anxious expression, you could just say that he wanted to wait for a bit longer. With his sword slung over his shoulder, he ran his fingers along the battered sheath.

At last, from the direction he was looking in rolled

up a small carriage covered in dust. As it approached he could hear the sounds of two horses galloping and the wheels turning, the carriage wasn't that big. The rooftop of the black carriage slowly came into view, Orphen slowly stood up, he then moved to the centre of the road and stretched out his arms.

“Halt!”

He shouted. The carriage was about ten metres away, he could see the driver cursing to himself while pulling at the reins.

The carriage stopped. He could see the words “Alliance of Sorcerers” written on the side, the words were thinly tinted with gold.

The man on the carriage was about 40 years old, he jumped off the carriage to face Orphen. However, Orphen revealed his dragon necklace to him and he immediately become very respectful.

“Where are you heading?”

Orphen asked impatiently.

“.....Totokanta, how far away is it?”

“Oh, it’s about three kilometres away.”

“If that’s the case, I could easily be there in ten minutes.”

“Hey!”

“Shut up and do what I tell you! Hurry up and get out of here now!”

“.....But.....”

“Just do it already!”

Orphen shouted, then carriage then swiftly moved towards Totokanta. After it was out of his sight, Orphen started to move.

His voice was louder this time, but with a hint of sadness.

“Come out. You should have suspected that I’d be waiting here for you!”

Orphen had already done a great deal of thinking, but he doesn't regret it. But in his heart there still remained doubt, and not knowing what the future would bring. Though, he really wanted to confirm if initial suspicions were correct.

The other side of the carriage door was opened, he saw a tall man walk down from the steps. It was at that very moment, that all those feelings and emotions came rushing back to him.

“What do you want, Krylancelo?”

Childman's feet touched the ground, he was holding the Sword of Baltanders Orphen carefully looked at him, and he was holding the sword as if it was an extension of himself. Five years ago when Azalie turned, that sword was covered in blood. A few days ago that sword was removed from the Everlasting residence. And now — — it was in Childman's hands.

“You know why I'm here.”

“.....Do I? Though know this, your actions the other day were treasonous. But, you did lure out the monster for us. I will let the other’s know this, while they determine your punishment.”

“Quite the speech, that’s not the Childman I know.”

Orphen said meaningfully. Childman’s usual cold face now wore a slight shocked expression.

Childman was silent for a moment. However, he eventually sighed, but when he finally spoke it was like Orphen was talking to a totally different person.

“.....Since when did you notice?”

“When you gave the flying monster the fatal blow, he told me something as he was dying.”

Orphen stared at Childman, and continued.

“Hey, Azalie. I want to talk about.....your rather poor response to my call.”

Childman wasn’t a handsome man, but his rather cold expressions always did have it’s charm. However, he has changed, and Orphen has noticed

this.

Five years ago, his instincts and mannerism were just like Azalie's.

“.....What are you planning to do?”

Five years ago, she was asked this same question. On her face appeared a humble smile, the Sword of Baltanders in her hand trembled ever so slightly. But these fingers that clung to the sword were Childman's.

The sword was now placed into an ancient scabbard. Between the hilt and the blade there was a moon, with a state of a beast.

Orphen's attention moved from the sword to the person standing in front of him. He reached a decision.

“I've made a decision.”

“It's good to see you again. You've become strong, Krylancelo.”

“After all, it's been five years. Though, I'm still not

that wise.”

“Maybe. However, I have an indescribable impression of you. Compared to Childman and Hartia, you’ve become a rather gentle sorcerer. If I were to choose a partner, it would be you.”

Azalie shrugged.

“As you said. I realized that you would be waiting here for me. You saw through me and saw who I truly was, unlike Hartia and the others. But you, you understand me. Only you.

“.....Can you begin to explain? That guy in the carriage will probably be back soon.” Azalie nodded, but then her smile reverted to that of the deadly Childman— — “Five years ago, I failed to cast the right magic with the sword. And as a result, I transformed into that monster, and I began to wander the land. That’s when Childman and the other black sorcerers began to chase me, to keep the reputation of the Tower from being stained, they tried to erase my existence. There should still be

some evidence for me to get rid of, after all, I never did lose my sanity.”

Azalie’s dark eyes shined in the light. She snorted, then continued.

“Throughout the last five years I always retained my sanity, while evading Childman. And during this time, my lovely brother has grown up to be quite the man.”

When she was talking she was putting her feelings into words, while smiling. But her face soon turned serious.

“It was about a month ago, that I knew if it continued that one day I would go insane. Even if I didn’t, one day Childman would kill me. So, I looked for ways to free myself.”

“.....That’s when you thought about the Sword of Baltanders, and how it could restore you to your original self.”

Orphen muttered, while Azalie nodded.

“However, five years ago Childman hid the sword.”

“Yeah, I heard about that.”

“Childman wanted to end the hunt. You know how I’m good with white magic, right? I wasn’t prepared to take advantage of Childman, so he replaced his spirit with me. You could call it an exchange.

Honestly, I didn’t think it would work but it seems I won.”

“.....So, Childman is gone?”

Orphen spoke with a depressed voice.

She shrugged, and continued talking.

“They hunted me for five years, many times it was kill or be killed.”

Orphen just looked at her without saying a word. Azalie saw this as him agreeing with her, so she continued.

“It sounds ironic, I know. Childman always did think he could restore me. I followed his trail to Totokanta, where he broke into the some mansion. I knew the

sword had to be there, you know the rest. To retrieve the sword, I had to kill Childman.

Orphen frowned.

“So, you felt the need to remove Childman from the world. You killed many people from the Tower of Fang, and Childman will have to face the consequences. After that, you should try and hide someone. You also might want to change into someone else.”

“.....It’s not that easy.”

A wry smile emerged on Azalie’s face, then she continued talking.

“That’s why I failed five years ago. Using the sword I could have changed my appearance, but it is still a weapon. And when I stabbed myself with it, it broke my mental concentration and thus I became that monster.”

“You could still try again.”

“Yes, I plan to do so. But.....what are you going to do

now?”

Azalie said in a defiant tone, although this could be because she was in Childman’s taller body. But Orphen still looked at her, just like he did when they were at the Tower.

Orphen stared directly into Azalie’s eyes. Her appearance was that of Childman’s, but the way her eyes and voice seemed was just like Azalie’s. Orphen gripped his sheath, and pulled out his sword.

“Do you plan on using that?”

Azalie asked. Orphen shook his head and murmured softly.

“If you were my lover, I would accept what you’ve said. However, that is not the case. You killed Childman.”

“Didn’t you hear me? It was kill or be killed.”

“You’re a smart person, you should have tried to avoid killing people. But in order to save your life

you.....killed.”

Orphen’s could feel his voice becoming strained.

“Are you calling me a murderer?”

Orphen harshly answered Azalie’s response.

“I respect you. But this is betrayal.”

“You think too highly of me. Did you expect me to run forever.”

“But still, you didn’t have to kill him.”

“It was kill or be killed. He tried to kill me — —”

“No!”

Orphen shouted, as he waved his sword.

“Why do you think he personally hid the sword? Why do you think he came after you personally? If he was going to replace his spirit with yours, why was he looking for the sword? He’s not the type of guy who gives empty promises, he said it was impossible to restore you with the sword. But he lied — —he knew the sword could restore you. He

wanted to save you himself!

“.....That’s nothing more than speculation.”

“At your funeral, he said to me, turning you back into human was impossible. He also said I couldn’t do it— —that’s because he thought he could do it.”

Orphen finished. By looking at Azalie— —or rather Childman, you could easily tell that her spirit was shaken. He had never seen Childman’s face like this, that’s because this expression was Azalie’s. Orphen continued talking.

“He always wanted to save you using his own means, instead of mine. This whole hunt was a farce, he was using their magic to find your whereabouts. And all this time I was wandering around the place, he was on your tail. But then again, he always was more clever than me.”

Orphen finished talking, he was out of breath and feeling a little tired. While he gasped for air, Azalie looked at him with an odd expression. And then sighed.

“Such a nasty topic. Five years go, do you know why I used the sword?”

Azalie said, as she pulled out the Sword of Baltanders.

“I was hoping that the old man would notice me. I am a woman, and I wanted to be worthy enough to be his woman.”

She stuck the sword directly into the ground, her hands firmly on the tilt. Orphen’s gaze turned from the sword back to Azalie, as she then threw the scabbard to the ground. The scabbard rattled as the hit the streets protruding stones.

Orphen also raised his sword.

“Then why did you kill him?”

“I don’t know.....maybe it was because my purpose has been achieved.”

“You purpose?”

“Maybe didn’t recognize me.”

She joking said, the she made her move.

“Azalie.....”

She held the sword to Orphen’s throat, then he slowly stepped back.

“I’m only kidding. However, I hope you can understand me. I had no other choice.”

(Azalie — —)

Orphen gripped the hilt of his sword with mixed feelings. He knew he had to do this. Was he truly here to kill her, he couldn’t make sense of things.

Azalie raised his sword for him. From his point of view, the tip of the sword was pointing directly into the sky. Childman would never lift a sword like that, he could easily tell that Azalie was enjoying herself.

This is Azalie, Orphen told himself. Even though she wasn’t Childman anymore, he carefully thought about if maybe both of them created a new personality.

Azalie then moved Childman’s body forward in a

very fast motion.

Orphen could tell that this was one of her moves, and if it is she won't follow up her first attack.

Orphen then attempted to lure her closer, as both of them were pitted against each other.

Azalie was so determined that she didn't even breath. Step after step she came ever closer, and before he knew it the tip of the sword almost touched him — — It was so fast that he couldn't hear the sword whipping upwards past him.

Orphen didn't even move. She aimed to deal a violent blow to his shoulder.

However, at that very moment, he used all the strength in his body to block the sword and swiped it from her hand.

The sword tumbled through the air, and fell behind Orphen. For a moment, both of them stood motionless. Azalie was totally in dismay, and looked down at Childman's empty hands.

“You weren’t aiming to kill, Azalie.”

Orphen moved to sword into his right hand.

“After all, I have no chance of winning against you. Do you remember that ring? The which can be used in self-defence, and only once.”

“.....You had that ring on your finger?



Orphen shrugged.

“Well, actually you don’t need to wear it on your finger. As long as it’s inside you, it can still be used.”

Orphen with his left hand, patted his belly. Azalie stared at him in disbelief, as Orphen stepped towards her. This time she didn’t retreat, but laugh.

“You can’t be serious! You moron, I can’t believe you actually— —”

Azalie laughed uncontrollably, but Orphen continued to approach her.

“This is a showdown, Azalie.”

Azalie suddenly hid her smile, and like a cat she quickly squatted and rushed him— —

Orphen moved his sword downwards, and he could hear the sword physically impacting the Demon-Witch Azalie. She screamed as she fell backwards.

Epilogue

A summer breeze flew into Totokanta, you could even taste it in the air. It was a sunny day in June, and the city's environment was very warm.

Enhancing the cities particular green scenery.

The courtyard of the Everlasting residence was in a mess after the last battle. Orphen spent three days fixing the area, but even after that there was still a lot to do.

Two horses made a neighing sound, showing their anxiety. Two chestnut coloured horses were tied to a carriage, which Orphen was given charge of.

“Are you ready?”

“Yeah, no problem.”

Orphen was in a daze as he heard their voices, and he immediately turned his head the other way. Standing in front of the west entrance of the

Everlasting estate, Tishtiny and Mariabelle were waiting to see him off. He didn't know why, but Cleo wasn't there.

Orphen just watched the two horses.

“Most of the work is already done, anyway, I'm all done here.”

“So, those two guys escaped with the sword?”

Tishtiny's smile soon turned into a frown. She cocked her eyebrow which showed her beautiful eyebrows and dignified wrinkles.

“Those guys are probably trying to find a place where they can sell the sword. They sure could make a pretty penny out of it.”

Orphen sighed, and scratched his head.

“Um.....where is Cleo? I thought she would be here.”

“That girl——”

Tishtiny and Mariabelle looked to the side, both of their mouths opened slightly. Tishtiny didn't even

finish her sentence, her shoulder trembled a little.

Tishtiny watched Orphen's reaction.

He spoke with a wry smile.

".....You're a very good woman, Tishtiny. However, I thought you were wiser."

"Is that so?"

Tishtiny struck a pose, sticking her hands on her hips.

"Whoops, that was a slip of the tongue. You are a wise mother, really."

"That girl will please you."

"As long as she follows my orders. Though, if I encounter a situation I can't deal with, I'll send her back."

Orphen finished, he moved his gaze from Tishtiny over to Mariabelle. Looking at them side by side, he could tell that they were mother and daughter. He always thought that Mariabelle was the kind of girl

who didn't talk much, but this didn't seem to be the case. Mariabelle took a deep breath, with her cheery-coloured lips she spoke.

"I really think, our marriage is a good idea."

Orphen was surprised by this, and hesitated for a moment. Her slender arms wrapped around his neck, and she gently kissed him on the cheek. Feeling her touch, he recalled a memory.

"She's went through a lot, she's head over heels for you....."

How could this happen, Orphen felt somewhat dizzy. He smiled back at her.

*

Leaving the city, Orphen rode the carriage which was moving at a briskly pace. Orphen then thought about Vulcan, he knew he would go after the sword. And that means heading to the Tower of Fang, in the

north of the continent.

He then came to stairway road, a few days ago Azalie passed here in a carriage. Orphen started to think, he then slowed down the horses with the reins, so he could enjoy the relaxing breeze.

*

“This is Vulcan’s sword.”

Staring down at the ground, he saw Azalie panting.

“That idiot doesn’t even know how to use a sword, he usually beat’s it off his brother’s head. You know what? His head is probably harder than steel. But anyway, because of this the sword was almost destroyed. Though, Azalie, at least it could still break your ribs.”

“You could have killed me.”

Her face was covered with sweat, Orphen flung back Vulcan’s sword.

“You were killed once by a sword, I don’t want you dying by one again.”

“So, what are you going to do with me?”

“

Orphen picked up the sword of Baltanders and thought for a moment, thinking about what he would do next.

“You can choose your own destiny.”

Orphen said, as he handed the sword over to Azalie.

“This sword was able to change you into that monster, it can probably be used to change you back into your old self. Or, you can continue using Childman’s identity. No matter what you choose, I will fulfill your desire. But— —”

Orphen took a more serious tone.

“As long as you still feel guilty, no matter what path you take, don’t appear in front of me again. No matter what the reason, because you killed Childman.”

Azalie breathed hard for a while, then fell silent. He thought she was unconscious because of the pain, but she spoke.

*

“Are you going to show yourself, I’m getting a little bored riding alone.”

Sitting in the front of the carriage Orphen spoke, but didn’t turn around. Although the carriage wasn’t that big, it was capable of holding a couple of people. Then the curtains suddenly opened.

“How long have you known?” Cleo’s head poked out of the curtains, with a surprised look on her face.

Orphen said feebly.

“Tishtiny already gave me a hint.”

“So, am I allowed to come along?”

Orphen turned around and looked her straight in the

girl's eyes. It lasted a moment, but then he smiled, and she smiled too. Cleo took that as a yes, she was ecstatic.

"You haven't come out from behind the curtains, what are you hiding?"

"I'm not hiding anything."

She looked behind herself, and Orphen noticed this.

"Wait, who else is back there?"

Suddenly another face appeared out from behind the curtains.

"Majic!"

"Hello, I was wondering if you could teach me magic. That, and you didn't even say goodbye."

"I know, but how did you get into this carriage?"

"What, didn't I tell you?"

Cleo said in surprise.

"Well, me and Majic went to the same school. Even though we were in different years, our classroom

was the same. He mentioned the name Orphen and I was astounded that he knew you.”

“I said...”

Orphen muttered a desperate cry, but Majic interrupted him.

“I talked with my father after you disappeared for a couple of days. I told him I wanted you to teach me magic, but he told me to forget about it. But I insisted — —”

“Okay, I understand. Damn, that Bagup— —”

Orphen had no choice but to vent his anger on the reins, forcing the horses to move faster. He then looked up at the sky, it was a picturesque summer day. Feeling the wind on his face, he thought to himself about how he wouldn’t be alone on his next journey.

References and Translation Notes

1. ↑

<http://www.orphenpedia.com/wiki/%E3%82%B3>

2. ↑

<http://www.orphenpedia.com/wiki/%E3%82%B3>

Return to Main Page	Forward to Volume 2
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------